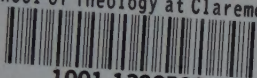


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QUEBEC CHAPEL

SERMONS,

VOL. I.

PREACHED IN THE FORMER HALF OF 1854.

BY

HENRY ALFORD, B.D.

MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.

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TO
THE CONGREGATION
OF
QUEBEC CHAPEL,

WITH EVERY WISH FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL WELFARE,

These Sermons

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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SERMON I.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

1854.

REV. iv. 8.

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is,
and is to come.”

THERE is something exceedingly solemn in the opening of a new year. Commonly, the present forms an easy and almost unmarked transition from the past to the future. But there are times, when the past seems summed up behind us, the future gathers in its mysterious gloom before us, and we ourselves stand as insulated spectators, stationary for a few moments while the vast stream flows on, to gather up the teaching of the things gone by, and to summon hope and trust and energy for those which are to come. At such times more than others, when even the trifler is visited for an instant by serious thought, does the Christian love to trace the hand of God in the church

and in the world ; to abstract himself for a season from the whirl of business and politics and controversy, and calmly answer the important question, "Where am I, and whither tending?"

The words of the text form part of the ascription of praise uttered in heaven by the four living creatures, who symbolize, as I believe, the creation of God. They express a sense of the holiness and eternity of the Almighty ; that He is essentially pure and just and merciful, and that His being and operations extend through past and present and to come ; that, in the sublime language of the prophet Isaiah¹, He is "the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity." Now just such a sense of the holiness and the providence of God befits us at the opening of another year of our lives. To have a firm persuasion that He is a pure and just and merciful Being, and to trace His operations as such in this His world, is the most precious result of human knowledge, and the highest triumph of the intellect of man. And do not suppose that I am using mere commonplace terms in thus speaking. One man reads history, and it is to him a mere accumulation of facts and dates. Another finds in it more than this. It interests him as a record of national and individual character, of stirring revolutions and social changes. Another, still rising in mental

¹ Isa. lvii. 15.

power and enjoyment, sees in it an onward progress of mankind in civilization and the arts; watches the foundations being laid of the vast social fabric, which is now far advanced in building, though yet short of completion; sees with deep interest the intermingling of the various races of men, by which the complicated arrangements of the modern world have been brought about. All these are upward steps; but who will deny, that a higher than all these is that on which the Christian philosopher stands, regarding the course of this world as ordered by the governance of Him who in Christ reconciled the world to Himself; who by wonderful prearrangements made straight in the desert a highway for His Son, and who is now putting all things under Him, that He may be King and Lord of this His purchased possession? He who thus regards history, alone possesses the true key to its secrets. To the mere worldly student, it presents a mysterious and lamentable spectacle. He sees the nations of the world drifting on the uncertain tide of time—conquest and defeat, freedom and slavery, now the lot of one, now of another; the fairest tracts of our earth a prey to individual ambition or cruel despotism. He rises from his perusal of history with saddened thoughts, and despairs of the destiny of man.

Far otherwise is it with the Christian student. He knows that the Gospel of Christ is

like leaven working in human society, till the whole be leavened. He knows that there is in the annals of nations no chance, no uncertainty, but that God has allotted the bounds of the habitation of each, and given each its work to fulfil; that it is He who marks out for the conqueror his path, and makes a way for civilization over the mighty waters; who ordains freedom and subjugation, and fixes the limits of national characters and energies; who uses for His vast purposes instruments the most unlikely and unconscious, and makes the wrath of man to praise Him.

And as this view of the course of the world is the highest result of wisdom, so is it likewise a cause of abundant consolation to the believer in Christ. It furnishes to him the comforting assurance, that all things are working together for good; that the Lord reigneth, be the earth never so unquiet; and every onward step in the advancement of man, while it elates others with unbecoming pride, fills him with humble joy, expecting, as he does, that the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ, and that He shall reign for ever and ever.

With such thoughts, beloved brethren, let us turn an observant eye on the state of the world and the Church, this first day of our new year.

The time is indeed rich in materials for

thought, and amply suggestive both of hope and fear. With all due allowance for our tendency to exaggerate the objects nearest to our own eyes, I think we may fairly say that never, in the memory of most of us, has a new year's day come upon us under circumstances so solemn, or which seem so completely to place us in the hand of Him who disposes all things,—waiting the issue of His almighty will.

If we look at His past dealings, we find abundant cause for thankfulness and adoration. For nearly nine and thirty years, has the vast portion of the globe which we with our kindred races inhabit, been almost exempt from the horrors of war. For upwards of a century, our own favoured land has never heard the din of battle. During this period of peace, immense progress has been made in all that cheers and elevates the life of man. We have powers in daily and ordinary exercise, which the last generation would have accounted fabulous. No similar space of time can be mentioned, in which the progress of the human race upward has been so rapid and so wonderful. And it would be ungrateful to Him from whom cometh every good gift, to conceal from ourselves that this progress of invention and physical power has been also accompanied by a gradual salutary moral change. The very fact, that the manners and language of society in the last century would be no longer tolerated in our own, is an

important one for the Christian to dwell on, as marking the extension, so to speak, of the out-works of the city of God among men; as shewing that the light set on an hill is shining down deeper, and penetrating the mists of the underlying valleys. The fact, that the heathenish and absurd practice of revenging an insult by mortal combat has at length sunk into merited contempt even with worldly men of sense, is a token that the strongholds of ignorance and pride are beginning to give way among us. We may trace the same progress in the present popular estimate of the clergy, as compared with that of the past century. We rejoice to feel, that the characters drawn in the works of fiction of those days would no longer find their types among the ministers of religion in our own; and this mainly, to say nothing of the increase of true religion among the clergy themselves, because the strong power of public opinion will not now permit a minister of Christ to be an unbeliever and a libertine, but expects of him that he should be faithful, sober and diligent, painstaking among his flock and in his pulpit. What can be a better or more satisfactory sign that our moral tone has improved, than this coercion brought to bear from without, in accordance with Scripture and with truth, on those to whom is committed the charge of souls?

For these, and many similar mercies, we

have every reason to be thankful to God. Nationally indeed we owe Him a debt of gratitude foremost among the states of the world. That our institutions are so admirably balanced, and work so safely and surely, as to form the wonder and example of the nations,—whose gift is it but His, who so conducted us through the great struggles and crises of our history, as by each one to root more firmly both our laws and our liberties—who has put it into our hearts, while like others we contend in party strife, unlike others to lay down that strife in our country's peril, and work side by side for her good?

Still less can I forget to direct your attention to a possession even more precious, which God's providence has richly bestowed upon us. I mean that of liberty of conscience: the right to examine His word for ourselves, and without taking our faith from priest or synod, to seek that wisdom which comes to each individual by the teaching of the Holy Spirit in his soul; to hold, and live upon, that Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The possession of such an advantage, which every year assures and expands to us, makes us responsible, I need hardly remind you, for the right use of it ourselves, and for providing that others use it rightly also; for liberty of an ignorant and unenlightened conscience, is a dangerous privilege indeed.

And in these last words, I have touched on one point of extreme importance, which at the opening of this year may well ask our earnest attention. It cannot be denied, that we have not succeeded in solving the problem of educating our people soundly and successfully. Nay perhaps, after all that we have done, we are as far from the solution of it as ever. And it is indeed an urgent and practical question for every intelligent English Christian to put to himself, how he may best aid, or suggest, endeavours to raise the spiritual and mental standard of his fellow-countrymen—how he may make them worthy of the rights which God's providence has put into their hands.

I will not venture to take a detailed survey of the condition, at this new year, of our branch of the Christian Church. In this place, all that might favour or offend party-feeling ought to be studiously avoided. But I cannot help expressing a hope, that some of the dangers which threatened us a few years since, have in a measure passed away; that the singularly ill-advised, but for us providential, attack of our common enemy, has tended to unite us more in our common faith; and that there are among us now more earnest men and men of God, of every party, within our pale. Yet here let us for a moment pause. The Church of the nation should grow with the nation. How do we stand in this respect? All the exertions which have

been made in this metropolis in building churches and providing clergy, have fallen very far short of the actual increase of population since those exertions begun ; so that not only are we now no better off than in the year '31, but we are literally worse provided than we were then with spiritual instruction for the masses of immortal beings whom our wants and our luxuries are accumulating around us. Here is a cause for humiliation, and a solemn call to active exertion, to which I hope many who hear me will be prepared to respond, by contribution and influence, when the time of appeal shall come.

In taking this review of our position for the coming year, I may be permitted to say something of ourselves as a congregation ; of our altered circumstances, and consequent duties. Having been heretofore unbound by local parochial ties, we now have undertaken the care of a district, and are called on to take part in evangelizing and shepherding the souls who are placed thickly round us. This work opens before us a prospect of vast usefulness and responsibility. Our chapel will be no longer merely the selected place of worship of those who from one cause or other are attracted hither, but will gradually become the mother church and spiritual home of a congregation dwelling round it. It thus becomes our duty to provide more than we ever have done before for the admission of

the poorer classes, and to invite them to come in and worship with us. It becomes our duty also to review some of the arrangements hitherto adopted in public worship here, and to adapt them more to the wants of a regular and mixed Christian congregation. One great step in the way of providing accommodation for the poor will this day be taken in the opening our chapel for evening service. I hope and trust that, by God's blessing, this addition to the means of grace may bring the good news of salvation to hundreds of our neighbours who are now sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. I may sincerely, at the beginning of a new year, congratulate you that we are called on to be fellow-workers together with God in so blessed a work. I will only add on this head, that we shall be truly thankful for every kind of help towards the complete and successful organization of the district which has been entrusted to us: whether in the way of offers to visit the poor, or transmission to us of hospital and dispensary letters, or in any other shape. The whole question of our school and its future form and management is under consideration; and here too, help will hereafter be needed. May God bless us in these our duties and prospects, and grant that another new year may find the work advancing and prospering!

But now let us lift our eyes from the spot where our own homes and duties lie, to the

wide horizon around us. If God can be traced as working in the past, the boldest will hardly venture to deny that His hand is evidently visible at the present conjuncture of the world's affairs. Let us first contemplate His merciful arrangements for the whole human race. At a time when our own, in common with other old and populous countries, was becoming, in every department of human industry, thronged and overwrought, vast tracts of other lands lay unpeopled and unattractive, their resources unknown, their soil profitless. Suddenly it pleased Him, by one of those wonderful interpositions which plainly speak with His voice, and put man's prudence out of the question, to open veins of wealth in those despised corners of the earth, and render them the centre of attraction to countless multitudes. Into the question of the effect of the supply thus furnished to those who remain at home, it belongs not to myself, nor to this place, to enter: it may suffice to say, that the Christian can have no doubt that it will be for good, and correspondent to the beneficence of Him who watches over the wants and necessities of all His creatures.

The two other instances of His working among us, which occur to every serious mind on this new year's day, if they are calculated to raise in us thoughts of a sadder kind, yet are not unaccompanied by tokens that He tempers judgment with mercy. The pestilence has

breathed over us its first warning breath, and we wait God's pleasure as to its future mission. It has been wisely said, that great pestilences mark the most rapid social ameliorations of mankind. Then the attention of the community is selfishly, and therefore effectually, aroused to the elements of disease and death, which might otherwise accumulate unheeded around them. Then it is that the opulent and luxurious, whose expenditure in self-indulgence flows on by thousands, while his charity drops by scanty units, is at length compelled, not for love of Christ or the poor, but in mere self-preservation, to aid in alleviating the destitution and misery around him. That God has brought us to such an issue—that our enormous selfishness is likely to be somewhat diverted from our tables and our equipages, to do good even in spite of ourselves, is surely a matter of thankfulness and not of murmuring. May only that which began with a selfish instinct, be changed, as it advances, into true Christian charity! May He who first brought light out of darkness, bring out of the mere sanitary agency, which would get rid, at any price, of the squalor and miasma of human wretchedness, a true and enlightened feeling of the brotherhood of all men in Christ, and a humble following of His blessed example, who though He was rich, became poor for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be rich. If such be the

result of the visitation, precious as are the lives of her sons and daughters which are torn by it from the bosom of our country, we shall not reckon too dearly purchased by them the flower and crown of all blessings,—the charity, without which faith and works are alike nothing worth. Meanwhile, we are in God's hands. It may please Him to bless the means which are being used—would that I could say actively or effectually—for the prevention of the threatened outbreak this year; or it may please Him to loose on our homes the destroying angel, and speak to us in a voice which, though once or twice unheeded, shall this time be heard by all.

Let every one of us look up to Him in earnest prayer to stay His afflicting hand; but not so look up to Him, as to encourage indolence, or paralyze our own efforts. Never was any of the calamities which befall humanity so easily, so surely averted, as this has every where proved to be, by the prompt use of the simplest precautionary measures. It will be our own fault, if, through our carelessness or unreadiness, the disease overtakes us, before these have been earnestly and completely carried out. To *pray* is our duty—but always, and here eminently, to *WATCH*, as well as *pray*.

But the threatened ravages of disease are not the only indications given us this day of our dependence on the Divine Hand. The scourge

of God is even now suspended over the nations of the world. We hardly know, while we speak, whether the period of peace, so long and so mercifully vouchsafed to us, be not at an end; whether the storm, of which we have heard the distant and threatening sounds, have not already burst over Europe. And here, indeed, while we are sure that the mercy of God is over all His works at all times, we have every thing to dread. If it be a truth reluctantly acquiesced in, that great visitations of disease mark the advances of the human race, it is one patent and undeniable, that periods of war mark its retrogressions. It is then that art and science languish; that selfish and revengeful passions are evoked, and prevail over gentler and better feelings; that law gives place to licence, culture to neglect, plenty to famine. May it please God even yet to avert from us this the most terrible of all His judgments! But if it be His holy will to bring it upon us, may we be taught by Him both how to do, and how to suffer; may we be as one man united for the common welfare, willing to submit in a Christian spirit to privation and self-sacrifice, if we may be found in the path of His commandments. It may be that we have been too proud in our prosperity, too secure in our tenure of peace, too wedded to our family comforts; and now He, who gives or withholds these, is making Himself manifest to all of us. Let us hear the rod, and Him who

hath appointed it. Let us turn from the vanities and follies of the selfish world to our God. Let us resolve, at the beginning of this year, to live more in acknowledgment of Him, more in dependence on Him, more in prayer for His Holy Spirit, to guide and strengthen us for duty, more in likeness to and love of our adorable Redeemer.

At present, much of what God has done is unintelligible to us; more of what He is doing, seeing that we ourselves are a part of it, is hidden from us; and what He will do, and bring on the world, who shall presume to say? But let us remember, that to His people, to those who in their hearts and lives serve and love Him, a day will come when, gifted with nobler faculties, breathing a purer air, and gazing with a keener vision, they will trace all His dealings with man in their completeness, and confess that He hath done all things well. Then the blurred and blotted map of the world's history will be restored,—the vacant regions of human memory filled up,—every corner of darkness and mystery lit with the beams of the Sun of light and righteousness.

May we all, beloved brethren, strive and hope onward to that new year's day of heaven and earth, when the countless hosts of the redeemed, with the world's testimony to God's wisdom and power and goodness opened behind them, in the full fruition of their highest and final state in

His glorious unclouded presence, and with the calm and waveless ocean of eternity before them, teeming with new worlds of wonder and love, —shall burst forth in their song which shall fill the universe,—“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!”

SERMON II.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

1854.

ExOD. xii. 26.

“What mean ye by this service?”

THESE words are suggested by God Himself to Moses, as a question certain to be asked by the sons of the Israelites in Egypt of their fathers. We have in them an indirect testimony, thus early in the Bible history, to the fact that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, not with unmeaning formalities, but with a reasonable service. And if this was the case then, much more is it now, when His nature and attributes are no longer hidden under a veil of obscurity, but are revealed to us so graciously and fully in Christ. Our Christian services should all have coherence and meaning, and this their inner spirit should be known to the people and appreciated by them. Any one will be doing good, who will contribute

his efforts to preserve them from degenerating into a mere irrational and habitual form, and to put us in possession of their leading ideas and intentions.

It will be therefore my endeavour, in this and another sermon, to answer the question of my text, "What mean ye by this service?" as applied to our *Order of Morning and Evening Prayer*; trusting that such an exposition may be useful to many of you in reminding you of and freshening that which you have long known, and to some perhaps in directing their thoughts to a subject to which they may never have been turned.

And I will first disclaim all intention of upholding the English Prayerbook as a perfect liturgical work, or of depreciating the practices of other reformed Churches in comparison with our own. Nay, to institute such a comparison at all, is not my purpose. I simply wish to speak of the service as we find it,—as that used among ourselves, and one therefore which has a claim to be understood and appreciated by us.

I am sure I need not spend many words in setting before you the importance of such an enquiry, or in bespeaking for it a patient and serious hearing. We cannot be always laying the foundation of Christian doctrine; and one of the first and simplest acts of building up on the foundation, is surely this, to endeavour to provide that we may serve God here in His

house intelligently, acceptably, and with godly fear. Besides which, we live in an age whose boast and real excellence is, its good sense and manliness: an age when we have a right to feel contempt for all hypocrisies, for all mere formalisms, for all use of words and phrases, of forms of prayer and songs of praise, which have no meaning and spirit in them.

With these preliminary remarks, let us apply ourselves to our subject. And first let me remind you of a few general matters which belong to it.

It is of PUBLIC WORSHIP that we are about to speak. Now before the Reformation, the very idea of public worship was completely obscured and lost. The monstrous fiction of the *mass*, or of the service of God in His church consisting of one privileged man offering up Christ for the people, has blotted out public worship, properly so called, altogether from the Church of Rome. It was therefore one of the great objects of our Reformers, to restore the true idea and practice of the worship of a Christian congregation. Our Liturgy, in consequence, is throughout a congregational, a popular service.

The PEOPLE's part of the service is as plainly marked as the minister's part. It is just as absurd and irrational for the people to stand in silence when they should be performing their part of the service, as it would be for the

minister to stand silent when he should be performing his. And this matter is very much lost sight of. From the people having once been too ignorant to take their parts intelligently, a substitute for them was introduced, whose very name and office are totally unknown to the Prayerbook. And the bad habit of entrusting to this substitute the people's part of the service, has prevailed so widely and so long, that in many of our churches the Liturgy has degenerated into a dialogue between the minister and the clerk; the congregation standing by and looking on, without any suspicion of the absurdity of that which they are doing,—without any idea that whereas they would any where else earnestly defend their own Protestantism and its rights, they are in fact doing only that here which they would do in the Church of Rome, committing the service to others to perform, and repudiating their own part in it. Nothing so painfully shews the departure of life and spirit from the Church of England in her ordinary acts of worship, as this fact, that of her congregations, one with another, hardly perhaps one person in ten cares to take his allotted part in the service; that her sons and daughters, instead of joyfully claiming their share in the worship of the great assembled family, are content to forego their privilege, or discharge themselves of it by a substitute. I mention this in the outset, as generally applying to

the whole of what is to follow; it will be abundantly exemplified in detail as we go onward.

Our Church has evidently commenced her Order of Morning and Evening Prayer strongly impressed with the propriety of our appearing before God in a spirit of penitence for our sins. We come here from the world, after many days of worldly business and care. We come as a body of men redeemed by the blood of Christ, who was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. What so proper then, as that we should come as guilty sinners, with a humble sense of our own unworthiness? God being in heaven and we on earth, all true devotion should be penetrated with a sense of this His majesty, and of our own frailty and shortcomings. Hence the manner in which our services begin; hence the penitential sentences, the exhortation to confess our sins, the general confession, and the declaration by the minister of God's pardon covenanted to all who repent and believe. All this is the rational, and indeed in the main the necessary introduction to public worship, under whatever form it is put forth; whether as we have it, or in one continuous prayer offered for the congregation by a minister. And here let me make two remarks: First, that it seems to me quite to interfere with the spirit of the opening part of our Church of England service, to *commence by singing*. At the proper place, as we

shall presently see, praise succeeds to prayer and confession; but the order of things appears to be marred, by first beginning with praise, before we have humbled ourselves in the sight of God, and approached Him as sinners, pardoned through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Next, let me remark, how entirely those lose the reasonableness and completeness of the service, who are not present at its beginning. To say nothing of the undesirableness of a habit of late attendance on the many other grounds which might be alleged, it would be enough to rest it on this one, that the late attendant can never be an intelligent and rational worshipper; that besides the distraction which is thus occasioned to others, and the effect of a bad example, such an one is shewing, I will not say carelessness about the solemn duty of confession of sin to God, but at all events a want of appreciation of the spirit of that service in which he comes to join, and in proportion to that want, a defect in his own spiritual life. If we should be ashamed to be behind the appointed time in a conference granted to lay our wants before an earthly superior, how much more so when the King of kings condescends to stand in the midst of two or three gathered in His name, and to receive their petitions. And I am sure you will allow me to add, in the spirit of real kindness in which I

would wish every thing said here to be uttered and received, that in this our own chapel there is the less excuse for late attendance, as our hour of assembling for morning prayer is itself later than that of most of the churches around us.

But let us now examine more in detail the opening portion, of the spirit of which I have been speaking.

The SCRIPTURE is the repository of our rules of faith and practice: and our sixth Article declares that "*Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.*" It is then in strict consistency with such a declaration, that the spirit of penitence, which the Church seeks to produce in the assembled worshippers, should be enforced on them in the words of Scripture itself. On this principle the sentences are selected; being either direct exhortations to penitence and confession of sin, or gracious promises of God to those who do thus repent and confess, or sentiments once uttered by penitent sinners themselves, Then follows an exhortation, setting forth to us that if at all times it is our duty to acknowledge our sins before God, surely then most of all, when we assemble together to praise Him, to hear His word, and to lay before Him our

wants, temporal and spiritual. "*Wherefore,*" the minister concludes, "*I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany me with a pure heart and humble voice to the throne of the heavenly grace, saying after me.*" And the prayer which follows is entitled, "*A general confession, to be said of the whole congregation after the minister.*" Now observe the care here taken that there shall be no misunderstanding. "*I beseech you, as many as are here present;*" and "*to be said of the whole congregation.*" As far as words can convey meaning, the meaning of the Church is here conveyed; and we all plainly see that it is that every voice should be lifted up to God in the confession about to be made. Now with this so plain before us, let us look over a congregation like our own, and ask, "How many voices are lifted up?" Or rather let each one ask, "Is *my* voice lifted up, when this confession is made?" And if in answer any be disposed to say, that custom has allowed the practice of general responding, as it is called, to decline, my rejoinder to this is very plain. There are certain cases in our church service where I should be disposed to allow very great weight to custom. As for instance if the custom were rational, were a carrying out of the evident but unexpressed intentions of the framers of the Liturgy, or were a humane and gentle construction of some harsh rubric, which the lapse of time has antiquated. But

here not one of these excuses can be alleged. The custom has no such defence to stand on; no reasonable, certainly no Protestant ground. It seems to me eminently a case where we are bound to ask, not, what is the custom, but what is the plain course according to the judgment of our common sense and better feeling? I do hope that what I am saying to-day may induce some, who have never done it before, to commence from this time the good practice of responding aloud in the congregation. I would especially press the duty on the masters and heads of families. This is a matter in which example does every thing; and if the voice of the father of the household were heard, those of its members would be easily won to follow; and thus we should ere long be a united and devout congregation.

The confession having been made, the minister pronounces to the people the gracious message of pardon and peace which constitutes God's part of the new covenant—that “*He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel.*” It may not perhaps have struck you, that the concluding words of the absolution lead on to the next part of the service; viz. prayer, properly so called: “*Wherefore let us beseech Him to grant us true repentance, and His Holy Spirit; that those things may please Him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter*

may be pure and holy ; so that at the last we may come to His eternal joy."

But let me notice once for all a short direction inserted at this place: "*The people shall answer here, and at the end of all other prayers, 'Amen.'*" The "amen" of the congregation is the fervent assent to the prayer which has been offered in their name by the minister: their "so let it be," or "do thou grant it, O Lord," by which they make the prayer their own. And here again, to allow one person to do this on their behalf, is to nullify the act, which from its very nature is and must be their own.

We now join together in the prayer which our Saviour has given us as the pattern for our own prayers; and this direction is prefixed: "*Then the minister shall kneel, and say the Lord's Prayer with an audible voice ; the people also kneeling and repeating it with him, both here, and wheresoever else it is used in Divine Service.*"

I said that at the appropriate place in the service, praise succeeded to confession and prayer. At this point we have now arrived. If we have been devoutly joining in what has past, we have entered the church as penitent sinners, and confessed our unworthiness to God; we have applied to our souls the blood of Christ by faith; and standing in the adoption of sons in God's reconciled family, we have called upon our Father who is in heaven. Now surely,

if ever, is the time to break forth into songs of praise and thanksgiving. And observe how appropriately this is indicated in the service. No sooner have the last sounds of the Lord's Prayer died away, than the minister says, "*O Lord, open Thou our lips;*" the people answering, "*And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*" "*O God, make speed to save us.*" "*O Lord, make haste to help us.*"

Then "*all standing up*"—the immemorial posture of the Church to signify alacrity, energy, and joy—the minister and people lead the way to the service of praise which is about to follow, by joining in the simple and sublime hymn to the Blessed Trinity, whose co-existence, and co-operation in the work of Redemption, is the theme of praise of the Church of God for time past, present, and to come. This done, the minister calls on the people to begin the work of praise—"Praise ye the Lord"—to which the assembled congregation reply—and should not such a reply be made universally, heartily, and fervently?—"The Lord's name be praised."

And now first are the strains of joyous music heard in the church—now should every heart and voice join in the glad psalm of praise, "*O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.*" To this first hymn follows the daily portion of the *Psalter*, or *Psalms of David*. The custom now is, for minister and people to read alternate

verses of the Psalms. They were, it is true, originally the Church's hymn of praise, and the only one. But here I believe the modern custom has reason and right on its side. At the time of the Reformation, there was hardly any English sacred poetry which could be adopted for use in churches. The compilers of the Prayerbook had no choice before them. But as one after another Christian hymn was contributed to the general stock, it was rightly felt that the power of adopting these into the service of praise was one possessed, though not formally put forth, by the Church. They were so adopted: first the nervous but homely old version of the Psalms, then the more courtly but vastly inferior new version, and lastly an infinite variety of collections of Psalms and Hymns, all testifying to the universality with which the principle has been acknowledged, however variously it has been carried out. Some have lamented this variety; but I am disposed rather to accept it cheerfully, even with its practical inconveniences, as an instance of the general recognition of a right principle having overborne mere formal barriers.

But this being so, and Christian hymns having been introduced by tacit consent between the pauses of our service, shall we now revive the practice of chanting the whole Psalms? This I think would be undesirable, as tending to increase the length of a service already quite

long enough, and as overburdening the ordinary Liturgy with an undue musical portion. Shall we, on the other hand, *regret the presence* of this portion of the Psalter where it is? Certainly, *still less*: the Psalms are an important and most instructive part of Scripture, full of prophetic meaning, full of comfort and exhortation and example; and there is something social and refreshing in the alternate reading, though it may not be exactly according to the original intention of the framers of the Liturgy. I need not say that here also all are expected to bear their part. The practice of chanting the doxologies at the end of each Psalm is a good one, and has now become almost universal in our Church. It serves to relieve and mark the distinction between the Psalms themselves, and at the same time to keep alive the feeling of their real character as songs of praise. With regard to the duty of every member of the congregation joining as far as he is able in the praise of the Church, I will not enter on that part of our subject at present. When we are in a position to call on our *morning* congregation to fulfil this duty, I may hope to have an opportunity of laying it before them¹. Meantime I would remind those now present who are

¹ This alluded to the performance of the musical part of the morning service by professional singers, to the exclusion of the congregation from joining in it. The practice has now been discontinued. See Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

here in the *afternoons* and *evenings*, that in those services the duty presses fully on them, and they have every facility for its performance.

Next to the Psalms, follows a very important portion of the service—the READING OF THE WORD OF GOD. Taking for our Sundays selected lessons from the Old Testament, and the New Testament in order nearly throughout, two chapters of the Bible are read to our congregations on every occasion of their meeting together. This practice distinguishes the English Church among the reformed Churches, and has contributed, I believe, as much as any thing, to make England so especially the land of Bibles. Inestimable is the blessing of so much of God's word being sounded year after year in the ears of all classes in our country. It were only to be wished that the same advantage were still further developed, in the selection of a *third* set of proper lessons from the Old Testament for the evening service now so general in our town churches, and in the extension of the New Testament course of lessons so as to comprehend the Apocalypse. If we universally agree to regard the book of Revelation as part of the sacred canon of the New Testament, there can be no possible reason why it should not be regularly read in our churches. The difficulty of its interpretation would certainly not be increased, but in all probability diminished, by more familiarity with its contents. It is re-

markable too, that the only book of the New Testament which we exclude from the regular course of our lessons, is also the only one on the reading and understanding of which an especial blessing is pronounced. And even those who would demur with regard to the strictly prophetical part of the book, can surely not be satisfied that not one word of the Spirit's message to the Churches is ever heard in our public services. After each lesson we sing hymns of praise; either of human composition, as the *Te Deum* and *Benedicite*, or portions of Scripture, as the selected Psalms, and hymns from the 1st and 2nd chapters of St. Luke's Gospel. The former of these, the *Te Deum*, is admirably adapted for a transition from the Old Testament to the New; gathering up all the praises of God in Christ, and directing us onward to Him as our trust and stay.

The *confession of the Christian faith*, by the whole congregation, is a necessary part of our worship. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." No place therefore so reasonable and fit for the repetition of the Belief, as immediately after that word has been read. Let me just mention in passing, the importance of every tongue confessing that Jesus is Lord—of an open and public confession of Him by every voice, in this part of the Liturgy.

In the opening exhortation, the objects of

our assembling and meeting together are thus classified: "*To set forth His most worthy praise—to hear His most Holy Word—and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul.*" The two former of these are done; the last remains. The rest of the service is occupied in prayers and supplications. These form so weighty a portion of our Liturgy, as to require a separate and more detailed notice; and to this I purpose devoting another sermon, if the Lord will.

Meantime let us pause for a moment, and reflect on what has been said. I do not feel that any apology is needed for having brought this subject before you to-day, in preference to others which might have been more attractive, and at first sight more important. If we really do believe that God answers prayer, and that prayer is the intelligent and fervent expression of the heart's desire to Him as our Father in Christ, then it is not a secondary, but a most necessary thing, that we should be informed or reminded of this. The danger is great of our falling into an irrational, formalistic, hypocritical way of worship.

Do we feel how deeply we all need an answer to our public prayers—how deeply we all need growth in grace and the knowledge of Christ—how deeply we all need more of the spirit of thankfulness to God for all our family, our ecclesiastical, our national mercies? If we do

really feel these things, then I am willing to believe that we shall not regret the time spent to-day, and that which we purpose to spend on some future day, in rendering an answer to the question of our text, "What mean ye by this service?"

SERMON III.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

1854.

1 COR. xiv. 15.

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.”

ST. PAUL lived under the first great outpouring of the Spirit on the Church. In his time, it was no uncommon thing for divine inspiration to fall on one and another in a Christian assembly, and for the persons thus inspired to speak, in teaching or in prayer, not their own words, but those of the Spirit of God. Sometimes indeed the utterance was not understood by the speaker, being given forth merely as the Spirit prompted, without any intelligent perception in the person so affected. Sometimes it would happen that none present could interpret the words spoken, and they then fell useless on the congregation. Amidst many

matters of detail which it is difficult to explain, thus much appears certain.

Now if no epistle of St. Paul had been extant in which he dealt with the perplexities of such a state of things, it might have been uncertain how, judging by his other writings, he would have treated them. And two views, I can imagine, would have divided men's judgments. Some would tell us that he who wrote "Quench not the Spirit," would at all hazards have encouraged the utterances of that Spirit, as sacred and holy tokens, testifying to God's power in His Church, irrespective of any immediate useful purpose which they might have served. Others again might surmise that he who wrote "Let all things be done to edifying," would in this case also have followed out that principle; and however sacred and precious he might account the outward tokens of the working of the Spirit, would regard as more sacred and precious the cultivation of far greater gifts than any accidental and supernatural one,—viz. the understandings and affections of Christian people. And we may imagine, if we will, the tone in which this latter party would be spoken of by the other—the charges of utilitarianism, and irreverence, and even rationalism, which would be very freely brought against them.

It is happy for us, the children of light and of the Reformation, that we are not left to

surmise what St. Paul would have done,—but that he has been led by the same Spirit of God to write this wonderful and noble Epistle, in which he has thrown all his influence, without any hesitation, backwardness, or qualification, into the common-sense view of the question. “I had rather,” he says, “speak in the church five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”

This then, brethren, is our rule: Christian teaching, and Christian prayer, and Christian praise, are all to be intelligible to the people, yea to the meanest among them. To conduct any of these in a tongue which the people do not understand, is an absurdity so monstrous, that nothing but the fact of its having been done and now being done in the Church of Rome, could, I believe, ever reconcile us even to the mention of such a thing.

For what is prayer? The expression of the heart to God; the breathings of man’s inner spirit to the Father of his spirit; the Abba Father of the reconciled and adopted son in God’s family. Surely if any thing should be hearty and earnest, this should. Some tell us of holy places on earth; and men have lavished cost to represent by stately form and gorgeous colour and dim religious light, the presence of God; and have erected altars before which men should bow in reverence, and shrines which

they should pass with soft and trembling step ; but I know, and I would have you know, but one holy place in this world, and that place is the footstool of the throne of grace, when a Christian's heart is lifted in prayer. It may be in the lofty cathedral or the homely cottage, in the closet of the student, at the desk of the merchant, in the field-path that leads to the daily work, on the midnight deck amidst the waste of waters, by the daily bedside of the living, or the hourly bedside of the dying,—in weakness, in error, in manifold hindrances of human wandering and human infirmity ; but wherever a heart communes with God, there is the true sanctuary, where earth's vanities must be shut out, where none but God's priests must tread, God's own true priests, anointed by His Spirit, clad in the white robe of His Son's righteousness, offering to Him the acceptable sacrifice of a holy life to His praise. The liturgy of that sanctuary is the universal utterance of mankind—it speaks in the lisp of the infant, in the falter of the aged, in the silent assent when the voice has failed. In that temple, there is no sacred language but the language of holiness. There no hypocrite can officiate, no counterfeit can enter. There the true cross of Jesus is uplifted before the eye of faith. There is the mercy-seat, and the mild and reconciled presence of Him who once dwelt awful and unapproachable between the cheru-

bim. And there every believer, at every time, has boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus.

And when we mount up from the individual to the family, from the family to the congregation, what is a Christian family, but a family of Christians? What is a Christian congregation, but a congregation of Christians? Think ye that we are Christians, by virtue of our being enrolled members of a society calling itself Christian? Are we Christians, because we are members of Christ's Church? No, brethren, far be the thought from any men with their Bibles in their hands; far be the thought from any members of that Church of England, which has, thank God, given us its definition thus: "The Church of Christ is a congregation of *faithful men*." Christians then do not derive their holiness from the Church, but *it* derives its holiness from *them*. The Christian congregation is made up of Christian individual believers; and when the Church prays, every individual Christian prays, with his heart's desire, with his mind's intelligence, with the fervency which is the gift of God's Holy Spirit, bearing witness with, pleading for, lifting upwards and sanctifying his own spirit in the act of prayer.

But here a distinction must be made between public and private prayer. Men's private prayers represent their individual wants, and are necessarily tinged by their individual consti-

tutions. Some men can pray most effectually in a set form of words ; others in the full outflowing of the thoughts and desires. Day by day circumstances vary, temperament varies ; joy and sorrow, health and sickness, active duty and patient suffering, sunshine and shadow, follow one another along the chequered path of each man's life,—and as his day is, so are his prayers. Not so with the Christian congregation. Here, when we speak of individual wants, we must necessarily confine ourselves to those which are common to every member of the Church at every time. Public prayer, in consequence, expresses that great and invariable cry of human weakness for divine strength, which every believer at all times is ready to utter ; that constant sacrifice of humble thankfulness for mercies bestowed, which, amidst all chances and changes, forms the reality of the Christian's life. True it is, that the congregation, like the individual, has its seasons of depression and exaltation ; but these are on a larger scale, fewer and further between ; amply provided for by a selection of occasional prayers, without allowing them to interrupt the ordinary course of supplication and thanksgiving.

It seems to follow then, from the very nature of public prayer, that it must consist of set forms of words. No individual extempore effusion can adequately satisfy the conditions which we have laid down. Either it will be modified by the

minister's own peculiarity, and turn of thought, and state of feeling at the time,—in which case it will fail of its purpose of expressing the normal wants of the congregation,—or it will, as has been found the case in the best-regulated dissenting communities, by degrees fall into a set framework of topics and arrangement, and so lose its extempore character.

But if forms of prayer seem to be almost necessary for public worship, it becomes the more important, that our use of those forms should not become a mere formality.

Let us then, taking up our subject of last Sunday, proceed to comment on the latter part of our Morning and Evening Service, which consists of PRAYER, properly so called. We began by humbling ourselves and confessing our sins before God, and being assured of His pardon promised and granted to every penitent sinner. We then broke forth into songs of praise to Him who is the strength of our salvation; we listened to and praised Him for His holy word, and joined in the confession of our Christian faith. We spoke last Sunday of each of these acts of the congregation in succession. We shewed the links which bind them together, and constitute a consistent and reasonable service. We saw how essentially popular and congregational the Liturgy is; the people's part and the minister's each distinctly marked; theirs to be performed by themselves, by every

individual among them, not indolently delegated to a substitute; and we took occasion to remark how fragmentary and irrational the service must be to those who allow the beginning of it to pass before entering the house of prayer.

Having then "set forth His most worthy praise," and "heard His most holy word," we come to "asking those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul."

And as now both minister and people are about to approach the throne of grace and commune with God, their mutual wishes are expressed that such an approach may be real and solemn, not unreal and hypocritical. "*The Lord be with you;*"—may He, whom you now profess to seek, be in very deed present to all your thoughts—solemnizing them, and raising them to Him in genuine earnest desire for those things which you are about to ask. To this good wish their reply is correspondent: "*And with thy spirit.*"

And now is the line of demarcation drawn, by Him who seeth the hearts, between the worshipper and the hypocrite. The former, I will not say with what interruptions from a soul cleaving to the dust and with difficulty lifted to God, but at all events with purpose of heart and simplicity of intention, sets himself to pray: the other assumes the attitude of devotion—the

face is buried in the hands, but the thoughts are far away: the last week's profits, the next week's schemes for more, the gaieties that are gone by or contemplated, these, and a thousand other trivial things of this selfish and foolish world, flit unreproved through his mind. O brethren, could the thoughts of each one here be uncovered during the season of prayer, how many of us would escape disgrace and contempt?

We are now invited by the minister, "*Let us pray.*" And as before we began the solemn service with humiliation, so now this supplicatory part of it. The short ejaculations, "*Lord, have mercy upon us,*" "*Christ, have mercy upon us,*" "*Lord, have mercy upon us,*" addressed in succession to each Person in the adorable Trinity, serve to remind us of our position as sinners, and to ensure a humble entrance into our employment of devotion. We again commence with the Lord's Prayer. And if any be disposed to require some remark respecting the repetitions of this prayer in our service, I will only say that it certainly is repeated far too often to be *listened to* with approval; but certainly not too often to be *joined in* with profit. He who sits and criticizes, craves for new words, and grudges the moments spent in the recurrence of the same simple sounds on an ear to which they are merely sounds; but he who kneels and prays,

craves for spiritual blessings, and hails the return of the deep though simple words, in which our Lord has taught us to sum up our wants; and finds this prayer, thus uttered by the whole congregation, one of the most refreshing and most effective parts of the service.

The responsive sentences which follow, have their place and proper office where they stand. They form, so to speak, an index of the more detailed prayers which come after. The first, "*O Lord, shew Thy mercy upon us;*" "*And grant us Thy salvation,*" represent those more general prayers which with the collect for the day, introduce our course of supplication. The next, "*O Lord, save the Queen;*" "*And mercifully hear us when we call upon Thee,*" allude to those prayers for kings and all in authority, which, according to the injunction of St. Paul, stand first in our intercessions. The third, "*Endue Thy ministers with righteousness;*" "*And make Thy chosen people joyful,*" to the prayers for ministers of God's word, the Bishops and Curates, which next follow. Then in allusion to the prayers in occasional temporal necessities, we say, "*Give peace in our time, O Lord;*" "*Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O God.*" And the last responsive sentence, "*O God, make clean our hearts within us;*" "*And take not Thy Holy Spirit from us,*" seems to point on to the Communion

Service, where we pray God in the opening collect to "*cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit.*"

The first prayer following these sentences is called the *collect of the day*. And here something must be said on the meaning of this term COLLECT. In the Liturgies of the ancient Church, and of many Churches still, there are certain spaces of time allotted to silent, or private devotion. We retain one such in our Ordination Service: "*After this, the congregation shall be desired secretly in their prayers to make their humble supplications to God for all these things: for the which prayers there shall be silence kept for a space.*" At the end of these silent prayers, the minister addresses a prayer to God on the subject which has been engaging the thoughts of the congregation, *collecting*, or embodying their petitions, which prayers were thence called "*collecta*," or COLLECTS. And this is said to be the reason why, in so many of these collects, we beseech God "*mercifully to hear the prayers of His people*," or to the like effect; meaning those prayers which had been just then privately offered.

On the selection and arrangement of the collects throughout the Christian year, it is not my present purpose to enter. It will be enough to say that they are among the most impressive of our prayers, being usually petitions for those

great spiritual blessings which the Epistle, or the Gospel, or the occasion of the day, brings prominently into view.

The collect for the day is followed, both in Morning and Evening Prayer, by two collects which remain fixed throughout the year: those in the morning for peace, from the Author of peace and love and concord, and for grace to spend the day to God's glory: those in the evening, again for peace, and for aid against the perils of the night which is coming.

This done, our intercessory prayers begin; and in the order above noticed. In the ordinary Morning and Evening Service they are three: the first two for our Sovereign and the Royal Family, the third for the clergy and people. To these was added, at the last revision of the Prayer Book in 1661, a prayer for all sorts and conditions of men, wherein, when the Litany is not read, we comprehend all our fellow-creatures, and especially those of the household of faith, in our intercessions. During the reading of this, an opportunity is given for any who are in distress of mind, body, or estate, to request the prayers of the congregation. And it were to be wished that this practice were much more common than it is. It would certainly be so, if we really believed in the efficacy of prayer. We should not then wait for the apparent approach of death before we desired to be prayed for in the assembly of Christians, but gladly

seek this and all other means of obtaining from God help in time of need.

At the same last revision of the Liturgy, the beautiful general form of Thanksgiving was also added, and forms a most appropriate conclusion to our Morning and Evening Prayers. As we pray unto God for future mercies, so are we bound to praise His holy Name for those which we have already received : for our creation and preservation, our comforts and many blessings of this life ; but above all for Christ ; for the means of grace afforded us here, and the hope of glory hereafter.

Our service finishes with a short prayer, supposed to have been written by St. Chrysostom, in which we claim that promise of our Lord, that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He would be in the midst of them ; and beseech Him to “*fulfil the desires and petitions*” which we have now expressed, as His infinite wisdom sees fit for us ; “*granting us,*” whatever becomes of our own views and wishes, “*in this world knowledge of His truth, and in the world to come life everlasting.*”

The service then closes with the apostolic Benediction.

Such is the ordinary form of Morning and Evening Prayer ; but on all Sunday mornings, and those of Wednesdays and Fridays, the shorter intercessory prayers are super-

seded by the Litany, or General Supplication. There is no need minutely to analyze this noble form of prayer and intercession. I may just remark, that it follows the order to which your attention has been so often directed: beginning with petitions for mercy to the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, it entreats deliverance from sin and its consequences, from dangers, and judgments, in tribulation, in wealth, in the hour of death and in the day of judgment; then passes on to intercessions of the most comprehensive kind, going through in detail all sorts and conditions of men,—from the Queen on her throne to the captive in the dungeon,—from the Lords of the Council, and Magistrates of the realm, to the sick and needy, the wayfaring, the desolate, the oppressed; the disconsolate widow, and the helpless child. Of all parts of our service this is the most comprehensive and the most affecting; is that in which a Christian indeed will be most ready to join in heart and voice. And here let me again say, how sad it is to see, as we often do see, a large congregation, on whose behalf these impressive petitions are one after another put up, sitting by in silent indifference, while one voice, or at the most a few here and there, utter the response which should be the simultaneous outburst of the whole assembled people, “*We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.*”

We have now completed that which we proposed last Sunday morning; viz. the answer, as relates to our Order of Morning and Evening Prayer, of the question, "*What mean ye by this service?*" I have not touched on the Order for the Administration of the Holy Communion, part of which accompanies our Sunday morning service. That will, I hope, at another time come under our special notice.

It has been my wish to shew you the coherence and meaning of the Liturgy which we use in the Church of England, and to satisfy you, if I might be able to do so, of the importance of your own part in it, and the necessity of every one among you boldly and honestly taking that part. On this point, plain speaking is the only course open to us. We live in days when counterfeits are despised,—in a land where realities alone can stand or make their way. And by all means let us bring the spirit of our age and the truthfulness of our nation here into the house of prayer. We do not want here the easy man of the world, who comes to quiet his conscience by witnessing public worship,—who looks on prayer as a useful form for decency's sake, the employment of clergymen and of the sick; that which he must come to ere he dies, but which he has no idea of coming to while he can help it. For such men our services were not framed,—our age is not calculated. Our

services were framed for Christian men, knowing the inestimable gift of God to mankind, aware of the dangers and necessities of their country, their families, and themselves; ready to claim the freedom which was won for them under God's providence at the Reformation, and to stand in God's house as God's real spiritual priests, offering to Him voice and heart and life, His own gifts, as an acceptable sacrifice to Him.

And as for our age,—is it a time for indolence and hypocrisy, for sitting and gazing on prayer and praise, when God's hand is uplifted, and none can tell where it may fall? when the Spirit of God is pouring forth upon us floods of knowledge, and we are rising into daily increased responsibility? when it is more than ever the Christian's bounden duty to be able to render a reason of the hope that is in him? when God's word and God's works are more than ever canvassed and searched, and no mine of wisdom left unexplored? When all is activity and energy, and reality and heart and stir, shall the Christian worshipper alone be listless and careless, half-convinced and at ease?

Let us ever hope and pray, beloved brethren, that we may be, as in all other matters, so in this very important one, true and faithful men,—true to our profession, and faithful to our God; knowing what we mean by our service, and

practising what we thus know; praying with the spirit, and praying with the understanding also.

For the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

SERMON IV.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

1854.

MATT. XX. 27.

“Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”

IF there is one character more deeply stamped on Christianity than another, it is, that of *reality*. The religion of Jesus Christ has proved itself no empty compromise, no unreal and fanciful system. It came into the world in an obscure corner of the Roman empire, and there it lay hid and worked for many years. It waged conflict with the hypocrisy of the Pharisee, with the worldliness of the Sadducee. Both these stood and scoffed beneath the cross on which its Founder expired. But it was not thus crushed. With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of Jesus. Being simple men, strong in the truth of their story and the reality of their character, they

could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard. Persecution dispersed them, and the testimony spread wider. Myriads of hearts, tired with fictions, finding no rest in the mythologies of heathenism, yearning for something better than the now empty husk of Judaism, grasped the welcome intelligence of One who had died and risen and revived to be Lord and Saviour of man's whole being. And now it was, that the reality of Christ's Gospel was shewn. No man could be a Christian, and continue as he was before. The corrupt licence of Paganism, and the exclusive misanthropy of the Jew, could not consist with a profession of Christ's religion. A Christian must be nothing else, in his heart of hearts. All that will group round and be subordinate to the love and obedience of Christ, this may be his, but nothing beyond. It is true that thus the character is extended very wide—even as wide as the Apostle's words, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise." But beyond these limits, the Christian was inflexible. If he was required to cast two grains of incense on the altar, and swear by the Genius of Cæsar, he gave his neck to the sword, rather than comply.

And of the same stern material has true

Christianity ever been made. The enemy has tried his devices against it in various ways. Sometimes he has met it with measures of violence. At others, with more success, he has attempted to subdue the constancy of Christ's servants by long seasons of tranquillity, during which the spiritual armour might rust, and the good fight of faith be forgotten. But the little band of true Christian soldiers has withstood all his attempts. If violence and persecution befel them, they gave their testimony, and their blood became the seed of the Church; if the world smiled and flattered, still, though with many defections, there were always those found, who were not ashamed to follow the Saviour whom they confessed, and count His words more precious than the world's maxims.

For you cannot, my brethren, you cannot make a compromise between the Gospel and the world. The Gospel tends upwards—Christ's pattern, Christ's words, Christ's person in glory,—these are its objects. The world tends downwards—self-indulgence, self-regard, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life,—these are its objects. And this is equally true of all times and states of society. You cannot secularize the Gospel so much, you cannot Christianize the world so much, as to make them approximate and, so to speak, clasp over each other. There must still be a marked difference between the man of the world and the

man of God. The narrow path will not run into the broad one, nor the broad absorb the narrow. One will be steep and leading to life, the other easy and leading to death. The traveller in the one will go with the multitude, light-hearted and approved, over the flowery meadow; the other, scantily accompanied and scoffed at, must brush through the thorns.

Our own lot has been cast far down in the stream of time. The doctrines of our faith are to us familiar words. Councils have met and decided them; martyrs have bled and sealed them. Other men have laboured, and we are entered into their labours. Society has borrowed much from the Gospel. The tranquillity of our state, the moral purity of our families, the fair surface, and I would hope more than surface, of piety,—all these are crumbs falling from our Master's table. But even here is our peril. We are in danger of being contented with the fragments, and forgetting the feast; of putting up with a compromise, and mistaking it for that reality which admits of no compromise.

It is therefore well frequently to go back to the fountain of truth Himself, and bring our practices and maxims to the test of some of our Lord's plain and pointed sayings. We thus can measure our divergence from that which He would have us to be, far better than by the more tempting comparisons of one age of the

Church with another, or of ourselves among ourselves.

One of these sayings of our Master I have selected from the lesson of this morning. The occasion of its being spoken you have already heard. Two of the Apostles, hearing now and often of the kingdom of Jesus, endeavour to bespeak for themselves, through their mother, distinguished places, when that kingdom shall come. For this ambitious request they are reprov'd by our Lord, who takes occasion to declare to all the disciples, that superiority in His kingdom is not to be won by contentious emulation of one another, as among the children of this world; but by humility and lowliness, by ministering to the good of others, and becoming least of all. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Let us contemplate this law of His kingdom, and by His blessing apply it to ourselves.

And in order to set its real meaning better before you, let me first point out to you how entirely it is at variance with the law of the children of this world. Greatness, in this world, is universally sought by exalting a man's self. More wealth, more power, more esteem among men, a grander display, and more profuse luxuries; these are landmarks in the world's path to greatness. In proportion to the attainment of these, a man is accounted chief over others. And no wonder; for as I before re-

marked, the world is naturally selfish, and all its practice, however varnished over by civilization and religion, is but refined selfishness still. Nor are wealth and luxury its only road to greatness. In its first rude state, physical strength constituted superiority. As men drew together, and commonwealths became settled, wealth took its place, and lifted a man above his fellows. And so indeed it ever will, in by far the larger part of human society. But with the advance of intelligence and education, men begin to perceive that knowledge is power; and hence arises the aristocracy of talent, which in free states like our own, raises men far above the merely wealthy, and promotes them to high influence and office.

But here again, we have but still further refined upon the selfish principle. Whether it be physical strength in the rude savage, or realized wealth in the toiling citizen, or triumphant talent in the man of intellect, the ordinary manner of men in the world is to turn each and all of these to the account of *self*; to rise by and upon them to power and notoriety, and a high position among mankind. Now this is obviously the very opposite of the rule in our text.

And not only is this generally done in the world, but it is strenuously defended and upheld. That a proper ambition forms a salutary motive to action, is almost universally recog-

nized ; and under cover of this seemingly innocent principle, we find the most inordinate selfishness tolerated and even praised ; and the mere fact of having won a prize in the great competition of life, is allowed to cover a multitude of mental, yea of moral defects, and to ensure deference and respect. So that it is not unwittingly that the world acts counter to our Saviour's rule, but deliberately and habitually.

Now let us turn to the rule itself, as illustrated by the comment of Him who gave it. " Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant : even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

This example is of immense importance. If it had not existed, it might have been said, The rule is metaphorical ; to be understood figuratively : it means that a humble spirit is the way to advancement in Christ's kingdom, not that any outward conduct shewing humiliation is required. And such things are said even now ; but with how little reason, let the glorious example shew. The King of kings and Lord of lords, before whom the power of men is mere weakness, and the wisdom of men mere foolishness, would win to Himself this world which sin had ruined. He would work in man's nature redemption for man. He would become chief among men. He would place Himself in the very centre of our human nature, and be

greatest of the sons of men. It was His will to gain for Himself an empire greater far than any of those which have ruled successively over great portions of this earth; He would have it all, from the creation till the doom; He would be Lord both of the dead and the living; so that in Him might be gathered and summed up all things in heaven and earth, and that in His name every knee might bow, and every prayer be offered. It was His will to be the way and the truth, the resurrection and the life; the only access to the Father, the only fountain of grace and help, the only Saviour of His people from their sins. He would win endless love and praise and adoration; so that the great multitude whom no man can number, and the many angels round about the throne, might proclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

What course then did He take to accomplish this mighty end? The universe was before Him; all means and resources were His. Which of all did He select? He came into this His world in a humble station. None ministered to Him, but He ministered to many. Where there was sorrow, sickness, sin, there He was found, comforting, healing, exhorting, forgiving. He had not where to lay His head, but went about doing good. In all His history we have

not one instance of offended dignity, of a harsh or hasty word, of a selfish or ambitious action. Nay, the meekness which characterized Him in life, accompanied Him even to death. For He submitted to die, and to die in pain and shame. Such was His path to glory. He would be chief among us, and He became our servant. Listen to the sublime words of the Apostle: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Behold here the way to eminence and power! Ye who are struggling in the great selfish race of life, thrusting one another down that yourselves may rise, now gratified, now disappointed; you to whom eminence is ever the object,—“forward” ever the watchword; in whose estimate love and peace and charity, and this world’s wellbeing, and the next world’s

interests, weigh but just so much as they are worth towards your one end, the aggrandizement of self;—who cast your hopes, your affections, your health of body, your peace of mind, as offerings to be crushed beneath the gigantic idol-car which thousands worship—see here the history of Him who won His way to power far beyond your ambition's highest dream, and mark His course—how different from your own! And He proposes that course for your imitation. Though He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him; though His exaltation is unapproachable by man, yet the path which He trod, we too must travel by.

Ye then who are ambitious, look upon Him. He recognizes your upward impulse. It is a noble endeavour, to rise. Eminence is a legitimate object;—"FORWARD," a watchword worthy of the Christian soldier. But let it be well understood what this eminence is; towards what this forward endeavour is to be directed. What is His own chief glory? Not His inherent dignity, though He is the eternal Son of God; not His creative power, though by Him all things were made; not His victory over Satan, though He led captivity captive, and triumphed over him openly; no—none of these—this is His chief glory, that He is the SAVIOUR OF SINNERS; that in Him the weary and heavy laden find rest; that the outcast to whom every human ear is shut, may cry to

Him, and never cry in vain ; that He will never break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax ; in other words, that whatever depths of grief and wretchedness and despair there are in our fallen humanity, He has fathomed them all, has gone down into their abysses, has become a servant of servants, has poured out His blood that we might live, and in the infinite condescension of His redeeming love, has sunk Himself beneath His enemies, that He might raise those enemies to His own heaven of bliss. This is His glory,—brightest of all His crowns is the crown of Redemption. When He was pleased to reveal Himself to the beloved Apostle in His exaltation at God's right hand, we read, "I looked, and lo, in the midst of the throne stood a Lamb as it had been slain ;" not as elsewhere, a triumphant conqueror ; not as elsewhere, one of a countenance like the sun shining in his strength ; but here, when the final glories of the Redeemer and His redeemed are described, the meek, subservient, suffering, bleeding Saviour is presented to us ; and the sublimity of inspired language, in its very highest effort to set forth Him who is made Lord over all, and has taken His kingdom and reigned, can reach no further than this—THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN.

And we, brethren, are His followers. Be ambitious, if you will. Strive ever upwards, onwards. Rise early, late take rest ; eat the

bread of carefulness. Aim to be chief. Nerve every arm, gather every resource. And let no time be lost. The race is long, the struggle arduous. Day after day register your progress, and let no day be without its line.

But there must be no mistake. The Saviour of sinners, mind, He is your pattern. By that pattern mark your advances. Not by the thousands added to the income, nor by the luxuries added to the table, nor by the splendour added to the equipage; for all this is the world's contradiction of the divine rule. No, let the same simple abstinence from parade and self-enjoyment characterize the Christian in the necessary and seemly provision for himself and his, in every station; and let his upward progress be otherwise registered. He would be chief, he would rise; he *must* rise, for he follows a risen Saviour. Let him, like that Saviour, BECOME A SERVANT. But, reply many of your hearts, *how* become a servant? Would you disturb the fair arrangements and proportions of society, and counsel us to confuse those ranks and degrees which God's providence has established? No, by no means. To disturb society is no part of our mission, but to bring it into fairer and holier order and proportion.

To *become a servant*, is a duty which each one must interpret for himself and herself, according to the several places which God has allotted us. And being interpreted, it will

mean, with all its various adaptations to individual cases, to serve others for their good : in the Apostle's words, "*to please our neighbour for his edification.*" Some can do this on a large and public scale ; others can engage actively in works of charity and mercy ; others must confine themselves to their own little circle of acquaintance, or their own households, or the members of their own family, or even one dear friend ; but all can become servants to others for their good, and it is here that our ambition must be shewn. If each one would but honestly examine wherein this his path of duty lies, there would, I am sure, be no real difficulty in finding it. I called it his path of duty ; but I forgot, perhaps, that we have to-day been treating not so much of duty, as of honour and advancement. *Doing good* is the only path to honour and advancement. There will come a day when all the differences of wealth, and splendour, and luxury, and talent, will be finally abolished, and *they that have done good* alone shall stand in the place of honour ; they that for Christ's sake, and by Christ's grace, have followed Christ's example.

And as we began with realities, so let us end. We call ourselves Christians. In this point of which I have been speaking, the Christian cannot be like the rest of the world. And the distinction will be no imaginary one, but broad and well marked. A man is either

serving self, or serving God and his kind. He cannot, in the ordinary sense of the words, do both.

Let it then be with each of us a subject of serious enquiry, whether our religion will stand this test : whether we are making ourselves the servants of others for their good, after the pattern of Christ, or are spending our labours in self-advancement. May God give us grace to answer the question honestly, and with a due sense of its immense importance. For it is not a matter of choice, so that if conscience smites us for our selfishness, we may feel a pang of sorrow and pass on ; but a matter of life and death, of bliss or woe. If you have taken up your Christianity merely as a convenient mask, and are Christians because others are Christians, it is not to be expected that Christ's words, however plain and direct, will have any influence over you. You have chosen your part with the world ; and the world's wealth, the world's good opinion, the world's pleasures are your reward. You in your lifetime receive your good things—the highest good of which you know. And this is ALL. With this life, your good will end. You have collected no materials for a happy eternity. Of Christ's love constraining you, Christ's Spirit guiding you, Christ's presence satisfying you, you know nothing. And therefore when you awake in that final state, where the soul's desires will not be formed,

but will be filled; where the hand will not be, as here, for ever stretched out and seeking, but will grasp its object and retain it for ever,—your souls, having had all they cared for, will sink down in helpless misery,—your hands will close on emptiness and anguish. “Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, in the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be an heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow¹.”

On the other hand, if we have taken up our Christianity not for worldly but for spiritual ends; if we really do love Christ, knowing that He first hath loved us,—and are willing to serve Him, not as little as we can help, but as well and thoroughly as we can,—let us ever be found spending our energies and our influence and our worldly means, in the manifold ways of doing good which His providence has opened before us; in becoming the servants of all, for their temporal and spiritual welfare.

This may be accounted worldly folly, but it will be heavenly wisdom. It may cost us some of the good things of this life, some of the esteem of the votaries of pride and fashion; but we shall be walking in Christ’s footsteps, led by Christ’s Spirit, hungering and thirsting

¹ Isa. xvii. 10, 11.

for Christ's righteousness. And thus, when this world has passed away and man's final state arrives, our object will not have passed, but will then be first gained : to reach Him after whom we have been striving, to awake up after His long-sought likeness and be satisfied.

Then, when they who by His grace have done good, shall go into life everlasting, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, may many of us be found to have sought and obtained distinction in this His way, which He hath pointed out and trodden before us ; " Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

SERMON V.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

1854.

COL. iii. 17.

“Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

IN my last morning sermon, I dwelt on the reality of our holy religion. I endeavoured to shew, by a sketch of some things which it professes to work, and of that which it has wrought, that it claims a real substantial influence over a man's heart and life; that one cannot be a Christian, and at the same time some other character which shall be of more importance, so that it shall bear one's religion in its train and rule it; but that Christianity, if it be genuine and true, must and will be paramount, carrying every thing else with it and ruling in all; that a man cannot, in any worthy sense of the words, be a Christian to amuse himself, or to inform himself, or to enrich himself, or to

quiet his conscience, or for any secondary motive whatever; but must be a Christian to RENEW himself. He cannot rule his religion, or bend it to his maxims and occasions, or take as little, or as much of it as he pleases; but his religion must rule *him*, must bend his maxims and occasions to its laws, and must take him up, body, soul, and spirit, and possess him all. And just in such a strain does the text speak, which I have chosen from the Epistle of the day. It advances, on the part of Christ, no less a claim than that which I have been specifying. "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Now as Christianity is itself a reality, so it deals with realities. If it could be shewn that its requirements were unreal, its statements exaggerated, its views of attainment visionary and unreasonable, it would lose immensely in its own character for truth and its power for good.

And here we may fall into one of two opposite mistakes. We may on the one hand, taking the sayings of Scripture strictly to the letter, set them down as exaggerated, and pitched far above the range of our capacities; and so content ourselves with putting them altogether aside, as some romance of angelic perfection,—and give ourselves no trouble about them. This is the way with worldly people in general. They admire the Gospel, and are quite ready to con-

fess how delightful it would be if we could but feel and do as the Gospel says, but look upon it as something quite out of their reach,—and never think of attempting to realize it. It is to them a mere night of stars to wonder and gaze at, not a sun to light them to their daily work and warm their hearts with love. This is one mistake, and the more common one. The other is the error of some religious people, who, like the former, straining the words of Scripture to their strict literal meaning, then require that meaning in full; and in fact thus lead by another road to the same point as the former, and indeed encourage them in their indolence and unbelief. And I am led to think that it is owing to a mixture of these two mistakes in society, or oftentimes (such inconsistent beings are we) in the same persons, that we find Christian precept and Christian practice so very widely sundered as we do. In precept and in theory, spirituality is stretched to the uttermost; the very highest doctrines of our faith are supposed to furnish our motives of daily action; but of that daily action itself nothing is said. It never would be recognized, amidst the technical theology which forms our religious vocabulary. All its familiar words and phrases, all its toils and temptations, all its wants and woes, are carefully avoided, as familiar and savouring of irreverence. And thus the Sunday sermon, and the week-day life, are severed by an

impassable gulf. The sermon finds no echoes in the life; the life brings no reminders of the sermon. And so men satisfy themselves to be Christian hearers, and heathen liver, without the least suspicion of inconsistency. They do not see how to live what they hear, because they so seldom hear about how they actually live.

And not only is this unreality producing these sad effects on every Christian congregation where it is found, but on the wide surface of general society its operations have been baleful in the extreme. It has allowed enormous moral abuses to spring up under the very shadow of the Christian Church. While that Church has been busying itself with words and matters far above the comprehension, and utterly removed from the sympathies of the middle and working classes, it has tacitly surrendered those classes to the very influences, which it was its chief mission on earth to counteract and keep down,—and has allowed those works of the devil, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy, to become fearfully prevalent. I do not hesitate to ascribe a very large proportion of our social evils, and of the infidelity now all but universal among our operative population, to this unreal teaching. A strained and exaggerated view of religion has been put before them, alien from their habits of thought, destitute of any points of contact with the trials and wants of their daily lives. They have looked at the classes of

society above them ;—they have seen that this religion has but little if any influence over them ; that undisguised selfishness, unbounded luxury, a total want of brotherly and sympathizing feeling for themselves, almost every where prevail. They have naturally recoiled from the religion itself and its professors ; have looked on Christianity as a mere instrument for maintaining the present outward state of things, and as disbelieved even by those who profess it most busily and most earnestly.

Nor is this mischief confined to the classes just mentioned, but has spread itself very widely and generally. The practical parts of Christianity seem to have dropped, so to speak, out of our Bibles, and correct doctrinal apprehension to have filled their place in importance. We have, conveniently for our own propensities, taken it for granted, that if the head be correctly informed with sound doctrine, the affections of the heart and the works of the life will follow as a matter of course ; forgetting that this is the very reverse of our Lord's own saying on the subject, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine¹."

Let us endeavour, under God's blessing, to set forth the duty inculcated in our text as a remedy against this unreal state,—as a bond whereby our religious and our common life may be blended together and made one.

¹ John vii. 17.

“Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

And who is the Lord Jesus, that we should thus do *all* our acts in His name? that His NAME should be the element in which we are to live and move and have our being?

Observe the extent of this saying; an extent of which it is impossible to divest it. No difference between literal and figurative will ever suffice to limit this precept to a few solemn acts of our lives. Either it is a mere empty exaggeration, or it goes to the extent of applying to all the acts of a man's daily life, important or unimportant. And it is plain that for such to be the case, it must propose to us some motive, and some rule, which shall touch that daily life at every point. Let me say a few words to you about such motives and rules of daily and hourly application. We frequently see men under their influence; in fact, no sight is more common, than to find a man actuated by a powerful motive which rules and directs his whole life. To some, gain is this stimulus; to others, ambition; to others again, love of their families, or love of their kind; to others again, the enthusiastic pursuit of science, or of art, or even the overcoming of obstacles for victory's sake, in the mere enjoyment of the exercise of an energetic nature and vigorous constitution. But whatever it be that thus bears a man on in life, spend a few moments with me in endeavour-

ing to analyze its nature and operation. In the very first place, REALITY is the essence and necessary condition of all such springs of life and action. I do not mean, that the object after which every man strives, need be an object outwardly and absolutely real, so that all men regard and recognize it as such; but it must be inwardly, and to him who follows it, real. We know that there are in the world many visionaries, men pursuing objects which in themselves have no real existence; which evermore elude the grasp, and are nevertheless evermore pursued by them. But *to them* they are not unreal. It is impossible that a man should give up his heart and life in pursuit of that in which he does not believe. The hypocrite is no exception; he only makes use of something which he does not believe, as an instrument towards the attainment of something which he does believe; of his religion, for example, in which he does not believe, towards serving himself, in whose comfort, and advancement, and wellbeing, he does believe most intensely, and with no manner of doubt. So true is this, that you never can make the most undeniable reality a motive to a man's life, unless it be also a reality *to him*; while the baseless fabric of a vision, which one moment's sound sense would scatter, may be, and has been, the leading motive to thousands who have confided in it as real; has actuated their lives,

borne them through difficulties, cheered them in sorrows, and reconciled them to face danger and death.

The next important step in our analysis is, to observe how such motives act upon men.

And mind I am speaking not of those which are fitful and occasional, but of those which are general and abiding; pervading, as that in our text claims to do, the whole life and character. How do these act? First as to their inward influence on a man himself. Are they evermore *in his view?* evermore *present to his thoughts?* Or is not their influence for the most part rather a constraining power of which from hour to hour he is unconscious, than a stimulus carried on by conscious effort? Take any of the cases which I mentioned just now. Take the man who is exerting himself through life for the maintenance or advancement of himself and his family. I do not deny that such an object is consciously present to him whenever he chooses to reflect on it, and that there are times when he does so reflect on it and make it consciously present to him; but day by day, in the toil and struggle of life, he is not ever thinking of this his object, but he is *pursuing* it. He does not waste his time and dissipate his thoughts by evermore yearning after the distant end, but concentrates his energies on the means which he is using towards it, and so more effectually promotes it. To recur to an illus-

tration which I have before used ; the labourer, working under the useful light and genial warmth of the day, does not lose his hours and dazzle his sight in gazing on the sun, but plies his arm with his eye fixed on his work, and so uses for its intended purpose that light which God has bestowed.

The second point in the working of such motives of general and lasting power, is this,—that they are very seldom indeed loudly professed by the persons on whom they act ; so seldom, that the very fact of a man giving out busily that he is acting from a certain motive, makes us at once suspicious that there is some other motive within which really actuates him, and that the professed one is merely put forward as a blind for the other. Here, as in nature, the deepest is the stillest. But, on the other hand, by this very stillness, all who are observant know its depth. Very seldom do we find, that the real motives of a man's life elude the notice of others. Whatever mystery a man of secrecy makes of his object in life, the spectators of that life generally arrive at correct conclusions respecting it. As men are not willing to display motives of such deep and general influence, so neither are they able to conceal them.

Such then appears to be the nature and manner of operation of such all-absorbing motives. In their essence, they must be, to the

individual on whom they act, real and substantial. In their operation they are not every moment present to his view, but exert an unconscious though continuous influence; they are not displayed before men, but neither can they be hidden from them.

Now let us recur to the motive implied by the words "IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS." And at once let us say, that there is a wide difference between persons who are actuated by motives based only on visionary unrealities, and those who follow objects which are absolutely and in themselves real. The former of these, it is evident, however *real to them* their objects of pursuit may be, will be going further from truth and solid profit, the further they pursue them; while the latter by their very pursuit will be brought nearer to truth, and more into harmony with the arrangements of Him who made them, and the world in which they live. So that, while it is not necessary that a motive should be based on reality in order to be all-constraining, it *is*, in order that it should be a worthy and sufficient motive for an intelligent and responsible being to be constrained by.

Now we believe that the facts implied in the name "THE LORD JESUS" rest upon evidence as strong as is capable of being alleged for any thing on which our minds are called to form a conclusion. The way for the Saviour of the world was wonderfully prepared, as we have

frequently seen. His work on earth was performed, and His triumph wrought, before various independent witnesses, whose narratives, satisfactory alike in their basis of agreement and their characteristic superficial differences, remain to us even to this day. And God has so admirably grounded and interwoven this series of facts in the history of our world, that all who deny it must be prepared to maintain and solve far greater difficulties than any which Christianity presents. The belief in the Lord Jesus, as presented to us in Scripture, is not only the unavoidable conclusion of a sound mind from evidence, but is also the simplest and only satisfactory way to account for the state of the world in which we find ourselves.

But based on reality as the proposed motive may be, it must be capable of being real to ME, or it cannot be my motive. Thousands of facts are absolutely and in themselves real, which I never realize; which have no answer in my heart, no effect on my conduct. Is it thus capable, in the very widest sense? For when I say, to me, I mean, to all mankind—the high and the low, the educated and the untaught, the keen and the dull:—as I said, it must have points of contact with every man's daily life, if it is to influence every man's daily life. Has it these points of contact? Our Lord was once addressed as a Teacher come from God². In

² John iii. 2, &c.

His answer, He disclaimed this as any sufficient description of His character. And with reason;—for had He been only this, He never could have thus touched our lives at every point. Mere precepts would never, even had we possessed St. John's 'number of books which the world would hardly contain,' have specified and provided for every man's case at every time; nor had they done so, could men have been made aware of and have applied them. Our Lord is more, much more than a teacher, or we never can do all things in His name. He being God, became man; one of us, nay, in one sense, every one of us—for He bore our sins and carried our sorrows. Emptying Himself of His glory and His power and His omniscience, He grew up through this our life, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood. In it, He bore temptation for every man, He suffered for every man, He tasted of death for every man. There is not an outcast who shall cry to Him and get no sympathy—not a weary and heavy-laden soul who shall not in Him find rest. Take any life of man, in any condition, at any time, and in Jesus there is for him help and hope. The great end of all He did and suffered, as regards *us*, is, that He might bring us to God—make us like Himself by His Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and renew our whole nature. He is not the Saviour merely of our souls, nor of our spirits, nor of our bodies, but of the whole man,

body, soul and spirit. He is not the Saviour of the poor only, nor of the rich only, but of all classes and occupations, of every age and condition of life.

Now suppose a man to embrace with inward conviction this character of Jesus Christ as HIS Saviour. "The Lord Jesus has done all this for ME," is his deep persuasion, in that inner chamber of the heart whence go forth the resolves of the will and the issues of the affections. "Christ hath bought me with a price; hath shed His precious blood for me, that I might be His and like Him; hath led a life of sorrows and become acquainted with grief, that I might have Him for my comfort in every sorrow, and my help in every temptation; hath won for me the Holy Spirit, the promise and gift of the Father, that I might be renewed after the image of Himself in righteousness and true holiness; hath ascended up into glory and is preparing a place for me, that I, when I have served Him, by His grace given, faithfully in this life, may enter into His joy." Let this persuasion be settled in the heart; let Christ's love to me become to me not only an acknowledged fact, but THE acknowledged fact of my life,—then, I say, it will become a constraining motive; then it will not be contented with influencing some of my faculties, with employing some of my time, with claiming some of my affections, but from the very nature of

things it must and will have ALL; will absorb me into its service, and take possession of my heart, and my motives, and my life, day by day; will be the sun that lights me to my work in life, so that whatsoever I do, in word or deed, I shall do under the influence of this constraining motive. CHRIST is MINE, and I am HIS. Jesus is not to me a name of history, nor a name of romance, nor a name to be wondered at, nor a name to be used for convenience or secondary ends, but a name of power and a name of love—a name in which I must live and move and have my being;—Jesus is my Lord and my God;—and whatsoever I do, solemn or ordinary, spiritual or secular, business or recreation,—whether I eat or drink, or come in or go out, or act or suffer, or think or speak, or live or die, I must do all in this name of the Lord Jesus.

Now I want to shew you that this is no exaggerated statement, but sober reality. And in order to this, let us apply what we said just now as to the method in which such deeply constraining motives act. We saw, that a man under their influence is not always consciously setting them before him; but that, as many of the most important physical functions of our frames are carried on without our consciousness, so there is a spontaneous action of the will and affections in the direction of a constraining motive, without such motive being ever present to

a man. And there can be no doubt that such is also the case with our spiritual being. There are certain solemn times when the great motive is, and must be, expressly recognized, and brought into marked operation; but when the whole man is possessed with the love of Christ, and Jesus becomes his Lord in the inner reality of his deepest convictions, the whole ordinary being follows the direction of the central impulse, and acquires a new nature, with instincts, and affections, and will, different from the former. We must not imagine in this case, any more than in the other, that the motive is ever present and being thought on. The Christian at his daily work is not ever pondering on spiritual truths. He would be a bad workman, and a bad Christian, if he were. But how often is this mistakenly urged on us. How often do we hear that when we are at our daily business, we must be thinking of Christ's love to us, and that while our hands are busy on earth, our thoughts must be in heaven. Now all such teaching is unreal, and cannot find an answer in the common life of men; nor is it according to that word of God which tells us, whatsoever our hand findeth to do, to do it with our might. No, brethren; the constraining motive being supplied by the conviction of Christ's love, the Christian does all in the name of the Lord Jesus, without that constant formal reference to Him, which those make, and those

insist on, who are comparative strangers to His name. His is no service of bondage, but a service of freedom, in which, the great spring of action being supplied, the affections and will, the thoughts and words and deeds, follow on as the spontaneous functions of the new spiritual life.

Again, pursuing the analogy before observed, we notice, that such a deep constraining motive is not usually displayed before men. The good actions of the hypocrite are mere justifications and consequences of his professions; whereas the profession of the Christian is the mere necessary result of his consistent devoted life. But in this case, as in those others, the existence of such a constraining motive is not easily nor commonly concealed. If a man be a Christian indeed, men will take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. The self-denial visible in his life, the mildness of his words, the charitableness of his thoughts, his practice of forbearance, forgiveness, and love, are so entirely different from the world's habits, that he cannot fail to be a marked man, both for ridicule and for reverence.

For it follows from all that has been said, that he cannot sanction by his approval, nor admit into his conduct, any thing which cannot be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. However still and silent, yet the current of his life sets de-

cidedly in one direction, and will admit of no diversion from it. He may be diligent in his business, punctual in his attention, admirable in his skill,—one who rises in his worldly profession; he may be a cheerful companion, the life of converse and of society; but with all these, or whatever other qualities he may be endowed with, HE IS A CHRISTIAN. He cannot prostitute them to the service of self and the world; he cannot turn his back on Christ; or if he is tempted ever to do so, it is to him, as to the Apostle of old, a subject of bitter grief and repentance.

May you, my dear friends, and I, know, by dwelling amongst the realities of a genuine Christian life, what it is to be constrained by Christ's love; may those of you who are Christians indeed, be cheered and upheld in your service of holy freedom by what has been now said; and may some who have hitherto been Christians only in name, be induced to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and live henceforward as redeemed by Him, and hoping to be glorified with Him.

SERMON VI.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

1854

2 COR. iv. 6.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

WE have listened, brethren, again this morning to the wondrous tale of creation. We have heard once more those words, full of old remembrances of our childhood, fresh in their beautiful simplicity now as then,—“God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” Perchance in these our maturer years, when we question and reflect, we sometimes look back on the day when the words, “God said,” were the only account we needed of creation’s mightiest fact; when, the voice or the speaking eye of a parent being the highest law we knew, we easily understood how the great Father of heaven and earth should speak, and His crea-

tures obey. And those seem to us happy times, in their clear and undisturbed apprehension of truth; no further question had yet arisen, no deeper search as yet perplexed us. But they were not always to last. The morning without clouds was to become overcast; the first simple faith was to be complicated and bewildered, And for what? That we might through much trial and experience, through the patient toil of years, work our way back to our childhood's faith, not now, it is true, simple and single in its trust, as then, but the deliberate result of the conscious acts of the mind, the triumph of the active and patient intellect. Thus the Christian becomes as a little child, and rich though he may be in the fruits of experience and of science, enters the kingdom of heaven humble and child-like, accepting God's word as the best record of God's ways.

GOD COMMANDED THE LIGHT TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS. To this after all we must come. When we have discovered the properties of any natural agent, and pass from enquiring what it is, to enquire *WHY* it is, we have no answer left but the will of the Almighty Creator. He willed it, and it was; or as His word expresses it in condescension to our human ways, He *spake* it, and it was.

But besides the general reflections which this calling up light out of darkness suggests to us on the character of the whole Scripture nar-

rative of creation,—each part of that narrative has its own peculiar lesson of instruction as to the divine mercies and perfections. And no part more than this. “God caused light to shine out of darkness:” that which was the condition of order and life and joy, out of that which was without form and void, lifeless and joyless. And such, brethren, is the divine character. God is not the author of confusion,—not the abettor of obscurity and concealment,—not the enemy of life and progress,—but the God of order and peace, the God of revelation and of knowledge, the Friend of all that He has made, and of its highest advance to life and happiness. So that He is appropriately characterized by this His first creative work, as “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness.” Similarly St. John says, “God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all;” and St. James calls Him “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.” St. John again, in the opening of his Gospel, declares of our Lord that “He was the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” Thus also we are called “children of light,” and are exhorted to walk as such. And in our text, a spiritual act of God is spoken of, analogous to the creation of light in the outward world: “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts.” Now here, as in the other case, the

simple mind finds no difficulty in receiving the fact and its necessity. That light from above is required to illuminate us before we can see God's spiritual ways, is at least not an unreasonable nor an obscure proposition. That He who is Light and the Father of lights, who is the Author of that which reveals and cheers the physical world, should also create the light of the intellectual and spiritual world, appears to follow as a matter of course from any consistent idea of His Power and His Providence. If the material creation, made by Him, endowed with all its properties by His hand, was yet in gloom and confusion until He said "Let there be light," there seems no difficulty in believing that the intellectual and spiritual creation may, though endowed by Him with all its wonderful faculties and powers, be also in gloom and confusion, aimless and profitless, until He shine upon it.

Here however, as in the other case, difficulties do arise in the way of recognizing this first and simplest view of God's truth. Place before a worldly man, an irreligious man of intellectual power, the proposition, "You must be enlightened from above, before you can receive the truths of Christ's Gospel"—"You must seek and gain the help of God's Holy Spirit, before you can embrace Christ as your Saviour, or His salvation as your portion"—I need not ask you, with what reception such

sayings will meet—we all know: they will be received perhaps with outward respect, as formulæ of the established religion of our country,—but inwardly they will be laughed to scorn, and he who utters them held in contempt.

And though here again, as before, the truest and ripest wisdom will surely end in the complete recognition of the need of divine enlightenment,—yet the labour is more arduous, the way longer and less inviting, the number of those who fail of the happy issue, far greater. The facts of physical science lie without us. The mind acts with reference to them independently, and from higher ground. They do not enter into its strongholds or grapple with its conscious superiority. Consequently it is expected and found, that men of science deal with them for the most part honestly, and with a sincere desire for truth. Here at least it is well known, that humility is the road to honour; and the confessions of some of the noblest sons of science record their sense of the vastness of God and the littleness of man. But with spiritual science, it is otherwise. It is no study of that which lies without us, but of ourselves; no contemplation of God through the medium of His works, but the direction of our spirits to the Father of those spirits. In physical science, the recognition of the act of God requires but the surrender of the outworks—but here, we must give up the citadel. The natural philo-

sopher may make a fair compromise with religion ; may admit it to share his inferences, to appear on his pages, to reconcile his own and the public conscience to his system ; but the spiritual philosopher, he that is wise unto salvation, can make no such terms ; he must admit his religion into his heart, there to rule supreme. And hence the extreme difficulty of bringing men inwardly, and in living reality, to acknowledge that they are sinful by nature and want pardoning,—dark by nature and want illuminating. Add too to this all the obstacles which the world, the flesh, and Satan raise against the surrender of the heart to Christ,—the cares and riches and pleasures of life,—the total negation of self-denial and humility and love in the maxims of the heartless world of fashion,—and the fortress seems indeed, as it is, impregnable to all but Almighty power.

The Scripture testimony to the fact is simple and clear : GOD HATH SHINED IN OUR HEARTS. And what kind of illumination is here recorded ? The Apostle had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel ; instructed in all the wisdom of the law, in which he profited above his equals. He was born, and had passed no unprofitable boyhood, at Tarsus, a noted seat of secular learning. To suppose him unaided in these his studies by divine help, would be to deny that every good and perfect gift is from above. But it is not of any of these that he here speaks. A time came,

when all these were not indeed superseded, but hallowed and quickened by a new and heavenly wisdom. He speaks of this time as the day “when it pleased God to reveal His Son in him¹.” And to this must be referred the first kindling of that divine light to which our text alludes; for he adds, after saying that God hath shined in our hearts,—“to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

He is speaking at the moment of the ministers of Christ: that it is their office to preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. He has just been using as an illustration the brightness of the face of Moses, when he came from the presence of God to speak to Israel. That brightness, he says, was interrupted by the veil drawn over his face; but here there is no such interruption: God hath shined in our hearts, in order that by us may be given forth to others the light of our knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, *i. e.* the knowledge of that glory of the Father which Christ reflects,—who is the brightness of His glory. The shining then in our hearts, is the lighting up of that knowledge there. And let us enquire, what does man unenlightened by God know of that glory of the Father which is reflected by Christ? To such a man the Scripture record lies open, as to others. As a record, he reads it. He finds in the Gospel

¹ Gal. i. 15, 16.

that One was born, lived and died, who claimed to have come from heaven, the Son of God, incarnate in the flesh of man. He reads of His miracles, and wonders at them, regarding them as proofs of His mission, as Nicodemus did. He reads His parables, and admires their skill in drawing high instruction from common life;—His discourses, and admires their pure and lofty morality. But can it be said that he knows or feels more than this? Certain expressions which he uses might seem as if he did; that Christ died for sin, and the like. But these he has merely accepted as current phrases, without any real appreciation of their meaning as applied to himself. And observe how far this kind of knowledge may go. It may advance to the very verge of the knowledge of the glory of the Father in Christ. A man with no more than this may be a diligent student of Scripture, an earnest reasoner about spiritual matters; he may speak, and write, and preach, the very language in which divine things are expressed; but there is no light within of the kind set forth in our text. How the glory of God is shewn forth by Christ in His work of redemption, he knows not, for he feels not; what His work for the world has been, he can never tell, till that work has been carried on in *himself*.

And the beginning of this work is the first lighting of this candle of the Lord in the heart. It is totally unlike any mere inference of the reason, or any thing which can be gained by

information from without. It does not supersede previous instruction and acquirement, but it brings these into new light and new action. It is not a thing which comes with observation,—not a matter of hearing voices, or seeing visions; nor is it a call to forsake duties or relations of life; but it is as the rising of a new day within,—unperceived before, gradual, gentle,—first the faintness of dawn, then object after object brought out into increasing light, till the Sun of righteousness arises and lights the labourer through the day of life. But though thus gentle, thus gradual, it is none the less a certainty. The spiritual day is as real as the natural day. There are those who are blind to the daylight of this earth. Born, alas, in darkness, the cheerful sunbeam has no meaning for them. They speak of light and colours as others speak, but through their words moves no living consciousness. But the day is none the less real, for their ignorance of it. The wide world lives in its beams and walks by its light. And there are those who are blind to the light of which we treat; who never saw its rays,—and though they speak of it as others do, are wholly unconscious of its reality. But it is none the less real, for them. The great multitude whom no man can number, the Church and people of God, live by its beams and walk in its light.

Let us trace its beginning, and some of its advances. Where, in the whole range of man's moral being, does it first appear? Where

shall we look for the first streak of the spiritual dawn? Our Lord Himself, the Lord of man's spirit, has told us. "He shall convict the world of SIN²." Here it is, that God's light in the heart is first kindled; here, amidst the dark and threatening clouds of moral guilt which weigh upon the sinner's prospect, that He who is the bright and morning star is first seen, and the faint signs of approaching day become evident.

What is SIN, to the man of the world? A fable, or a frightful dream; something to jest at, or something too terrible to be thought of; or very often both of these at once—a matter to be laughed over and sung of with his boon companions, but the horror of his solitude; an enemy whom he can cope with and dash off in health and strength, but the pale spectre of his sick-bed,—his accuser in his hours of weakness. Into the gloom which sin casts over his prospect, he dare not stedfastly gaze; he cares but to forget it, gathering though it be ever thicker and darker over his way.

He is not convinced of sin; he is terrified by it. He does not hate sin, he only hates the discomfort of knowing that he is a sinner.

How different is the conviction of sin, which is the first shining of the divine light in the heart. It may be said then to begin, when sin, from being a terror, becomes a grief to a man. As long as the heart is dark and worldly,

² John xvi. 8, &c.

there is no such thing as grief for sin. It is not felt to be ingratitude. But when it is so felt, the loving character of God is necessarily recognized. Grief for sin is the result of consciousness that we have not loved One who has deeply loved us. The link is thus knit between the sinner and Christ, which was wholly wanting before. He is now no longer the teacher sent from heaven, the worker of wonders to prove His mission, the conqueror of sin and death for the world, but He is my Saviour, who has come on earth that I might come to heaven; who has suffered that I might reign, and died that I might live; and my sins are now not merely my enemies,—now not merely spectres hunting me to my ruin,—but they are the barriers between me and my Saviour,—they are tokens of base ingratitude for His exceeding and infinite love; they are thorns on His dying brow, taunts cast on Him as He passes along with His cross. How new is every thing now become to me! I may indeed now be terrified—but even my terror is a new feeling;—it is not now the blind cowardice of guilt seeking to hide from God,—but I am terrified at my own amazing unworthiness, lest He who invites all should not receive me. I have no desire to fly from God; all my desire is towards Him: but I am guilty, ungrateful, outcast, and I fear I never can reach Him. Can I now jest at sin? Can I now forget sin? Can I now live complacently for self and the

world? Can I now work the works of darkness and shame any longer? No, brethren; the morn has arisen upon me, and the day-star shines in my heart; I have awoke from my sleep and arisen from the dead, and Christ is beginning to give me light.

“God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” See how the whole moral and spiritual world is changed by the conviction of sin entering the heart—by the first faint streak (for it is no more) of the spiritual dawn within. It is no more; for as yet there is not the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But this too is manifested, if we follow on to know the Lord—if we do not, having been once enlightened and partakers of the heavenly gift, turn back unto perdition. “He shall convince the world,” is our Lord’s next declaration, “of RIGHTEOUSNESS, because I go to My Father and ye see Me no more.” What cared the man of the world for RIGHTEOUSNESS? He had heard perhaps of a text which said “Be not righteous overmuch;” this he took care to misunderstand, and, so misunderstood, to apply full diligently; but of those others, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness,” and the like, he knew and cared nothing. But when true conviction of sin is in the heart, an earnest longing for righteousness accompanies it. Hatred of sin and love of holiness are co-

ordinate and inseparable. And where shall righteousness be found? It is not in myself, for I am all unworthy and guilty, ungrateful and self-condemned. It is not in my fellow-man; all are as myself, of one blood,—inheriting, and enhancing, the same disqualification. If it exist in ranks of beings above me, it is not mine—I have no claim to it. I look around, and look upward, for some righteousness to which I have a claim; which I may put on without presumption; in which I may stand accepted, when heaven and earth shall pass away. Is all, though the dawn has arisen, yet comparatively dark and drear? No bright object on which to fix the hopes, to centre the affections, to fulfil the desires? Again God says, “Let there be light.” And there is light: that pierced and buffeted Saviour whom my sins grieved,—whose love I mourned to have cast away, is shewn to be MY RIGHTEOUSNESS; to be now standing at God’s right hand in my flesh, man as I am man, Head of my renewed and glorified nature, pleading His perfect and spotless righteousness for me. That righteousness is MINE;—mine, without presumption on my part; mine, because He is my brother-man,—perfect and effectual, because He is my Lord and my God:—mine, because His accomplished work gained for me His Father’s promise, the blessed Spirit,—to change me into His like-

ness ; and that Spirit shall evermore renew me after His image—evermore take of His matters, and shew them unto me.

Again, what new and glorious light is shed on my way by this revelation of Christ ! Now indeed the Sun has arisen—and though clouds may hide him, and tempests drive over the fair face of heaven, it is no longer night—no longer the dim uncertain dawn, but the fulness of the day. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has opened its revelation within me. I begin to see how He is the true mirror of the Father's love and power ; of His love, in the amazing condescension by which He stooped to me to become mine ; of His power, in the conquest over my sins, their terror, their influence ; in that He hath burst the chains, and let the captive go free.

But as the morning is brighter than the dawn, so the noon than the morning. The path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. He shall convince the world of JUDGMENT, says our Lord, because the Prince of this world is judged. He who walks in darkness has lost all power to judge or discriminate. He who lives and walks in the light, sees all things in the light, and can judge of their true position and proportions. Thus the light which has arisen on the servant of God, enables him to judge and distinguish—to become wise unto salvation, and weigh the

importance of human affairs in the balance of the sanctuary. He is no longer misled by the mere dazzle of the world's greatness and wealth, nor reasoned out of his better mind by its philosophy falsely so called: Christ is now made unto him wisdom, as well as righteousness:—the highest proof of God's wisdom is Christ's finished work, by which He has provided salvation and a perfect righteousness for the repentant sinner. Thus the face of Christ reflects to him the glory of God: that Face which the world buffeted and still buffets, has revealed its beauty and majesty to him: that countenance which was so marred more than the sons of men, is lifted up in light upon him.

Thus do the children of God prove the reality of the words in our text, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God has revealed His Son in them, and in Him is Light.

And now what remains but for me solemnly to remind you all of the deep personal interest of what has been said to every one amongst you? You and I, my brother, must have light. We are tending on, hour by hour, to that untried final state where we shall see all things as they are. We want to be guided thither; to be guided to Him who dwells in Light, and who is Light. He is not averse from us, nor

separated from us. He is willing to shine upon us, and guide us. He has given us proof of His love, in sending His dear Son to live and die for us,—in sending His Spirit to lighten and direct us to Him. Let us seek the light while we may. Let us lay aside all pride, and independence of God, and in humility and prayer beseech Him so to lighten our eyes, that we sleep not in death ; so to shew us our way by His grace and spiritual help here, that, knowing Christ as the brightness of His glory, we may finally be with Him where He is, and behold that glory, of which we now guess so faintly, and speak so imperfectly.

SERMON VII.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

1854.

GEN. iii. 4.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”

THE narrative of the Fall of Man has ever been one full of mournful interest to the Christian, and of matter for scoffs and jeers to the infidel. The unusual character of the incidents and the agent is to *us* mysterious, and seems, though the events themselves are related, to throw a veil over their deeper causes ; while to *him* it is alike strange and incredible. Yet if we try this record of man's first sin by the test of our daily experience, we shall find that what temptation is now, it was then ; what human weakness was then, it is now. We shall discover, as in every other Scripture narrative, an exact mirror of the human heart ; abundant matter whereby to try and prove ourselves—to

detect our own infirmities, and strengthen our hands in God's ways.

It is one portion of this instruction that I would bring before you to-day; a portion exhibiting to us a device of the tempter, which overthrew our first mother, and which daily and hourly overthrows thousands now. "The serpent said unto the woman, 'Ye shall not surely die.'" Now we know that God had said to them, "Ye shall surely die." The tempter's device, then, amounted to this—a downright denial of that which God had said. It may seem to us a bold step, to come before God's creatures, and give God the lie; to address them, "The Author and upholder of your being has, I know, said yea, but I say nay." Bold however as it is, it is done every day, and every day succeeds. Among the many mysteries of the deceitfulness of sin, this is one of the greatest; that men, knowing what God has said, and fully aware that He has said it, will yet allow themselves to be persuaded that it shall not be so.

Let us endeavour, with an earnest desire to profit by the enquiry, to search into and illustrate this too often successful device of our common enemy. And notice, that I am speaking to those who receive what God has said in His word; to a congregation of professed Christians, believing the Bible. There are certain persons, on whom the device is tried, to persuade

them that "*God hath not said;*" to shake them in the profession of their faith, and sap the foundations of their spiritual being. But this is not the form of temptation which was chosen in our text. The tempter very well knew, that with those who had heard God's voice, such an assertion would have no weight. And he knows it well now. The majority even of indifferent Christians believe their Bibles. To suggest to them "*God hath not said,*" would shock and repel them; for such persons are usually, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, jealous enough over the outward framework of orthodoxy; strict guardians of the letter, which lies dead, and bears no testimony against them;—but the spirit, which lives and burns in the conscience, that is their enemy; and therefore hither it is that Satan directs his attacks. He suggests not "*God hath not said;*" but "*It shall not be.*"

It will be well, perhaps, to begin with the more notorious and palpable instances, in which this temptation is tried with success. There are many things against which God has uttered His voice in every man's heart; in which, even independently of written revelation, He has not left Himself without witness. And the voice which is heard within men distinctly pronounces to them, that such courses will be their ruin. He who lives in concealed or open sin, knows full well that God hath said, he shall surely die. He is aware that One is against

him who is too strong for him. He is miserable at the thought. He dares not face it in the darkness and alone. He dares not hear it echoed from God's book, or God's minister. Ruin everlasting is the frightful certainty which evermore weighs on his thoughts. But in the moment of temptation,—when unhallowed gain glitters before him,—when lust spreads her nets to entrap him,—when the thirst of revenge has tracked the victim,—the certainty of ruin is met by a counter-assertion of the tempter, "Thou shalt not surely die;" "Do the act, and cast the consequences to the winds." And thus, in denial of God's declaration, and in wilful opposition to Him, the act *is done*. And the practice, once begun, is a hardening and debasing one; so that we not unfrequently meet with the strange spectacle of a man with God's word and all God's assertions believed and resting on the conscience, and insisted on as regards others, while his life is in some fundamental point in entire opposition to that word, and to some of the plainest of those assertions. He has managed, by the help of Satan, who is ever ready with such help, to persuade himself, that just in that particular he shall contrive to escape—he shall *not surely die*.

We have a notable instance of such a character, in the wicked prophet Balaam. Nothing could be plainer than the words of God were to him, when he was urged by king Balak to

curse Israel : “ Thou shalt not curse the people : for they are blessed.” Nothing could be clearer than the announcement made to him, even when permission was given him to go with the king’s messengers, that he should not be allowed to speak his own words, but only those which God put in his mouth. He knew all this. The failure of his covetous hopes,—the king’s disfavour,—God’s anger,—his own ruin,—these were evident to him, if they ever were to any man. But with all these before his eyes, he rises up and takes his journey. Three separate times he vainly attempts to curse the people, each time protesting against himself, and warning the king that it was in vain ; and at length he is dismissed with ignominy. The next time we meet him, he has advanced further in crime, as every sinner against light and knowledge does. We now find him a bold and determined evil-doer ; overthrowing by licentious temptations God’s people whom he was not permitted to curse in words. We meet him but once more, and that is to read of his miserable end. It is indeed a tragedy fearful and wonderful ; but it is acted every day. Men with the full consciousness that God is against them, persist in opposition to Him, till they perish ;—persuading themselves, from one step to another, that matters shall not turn out so badly as God’s word, and God’s ministers, and God’s monitor within, tell them that they shall. In

the language of the great Apostle with regard to the heathen world, "Knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death," they continue to do them.

But it is not principally for the sake of open sinners, that I bring this subject before you to-day. I am speaking to those whose lot has been cast in singularly favoured times. The Gospel of Christ has so far influenced society here, that the open profligate, the notorious evil-liver, is in some measure winnowed out from it; and characters which within the memory of living men were every where found, exulting and shameless, are now comparatively rare, or at all events keep with their fellows, and pay to the advance of religion the tribute of at least hiding their shame from the public. If any such *be here* (and God alone knows the hearts), may they reflect on the fearful fact, that they stand forth as the foremost examples of the treachery and deceitfulness of sin. They need not any persuading, that God has said "Thou shalt surely die;" conscience tells it them,—it returns upon them ever darker and heavier, the longer they live in sin,—and as God has said, it shall surely be. May they in time flee to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,—may they look upon Him whom they have pierced, and live.

There are however other classes of persons besides notorious profligates, who are caught

by this device,—“Thou shalt not surely die.” And it is to them that I principally address myself this morning.

Let me recount, and dwell on, a few very simple sayings of God in His word.

God has declared, “TO BE CARNALLY MINDED IS DEATH.” Let us try to interpret this. To be carnally minded, is to be of the mind of the children of this world; of all those whose object in life is the enjoyment of life, and this world’s comfort, and pleasure, and honour, and good opinion; who pass day by day without a thought beyond the world, and as if they were never to live after this life. To be carnally minded, is to view things through a worldly medium; to estimate a man, not by his inward, but by his outward worth; to despise meekness, and quietness, and humble station, in comparison with the power of talent, and the pomp of wealth, and the pride of birth. To be carnally minded, is to prize and applaud and make much of youth and beauty and accomplishment, and to depreciate, and put at a distance, the feeble and the aged and the ungifted; to find a haunt and a home in the halls of revelry, and amidst the fever and flush of life, but to shrink from the chamber of sickness, and abhor even the passing shadow of death. The carnally minded are at enmity with God. Depart from us, say they, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. And so they go on in the world, in

God's world, without God; and the sun shines on them, and the flowers bloom for them, and sweet music sounds about them, but not a thought of God must intrude, or the gay face becomes solemn, and the merry voice falls to a whisper. These are the carnally minded. True, that the Gospel of Christ has obtained an influence, of an extent very inconvenient for them, in the world from which they take their maxims; and so they have found it as well to cast over this carnal life a thin veil of religion. They may advance as far as the Sunday ride to church, and the comfortable gaze at public worship, and the expected and unfelt trifle which it costs them to be known as benefactors to the popular charities of the day; but the carnal mind is beneath, unpenetrated by one real religious feeling,—as much in the world here, as elsewhere; they mind earthly things. Now of this kind of life God has plainly said, as we have seen, that it is DEATH; that those who live it shall surely die,—nay are dying now. And by this is meant, that such a life is the immortal spirit's ruin; that it breaks up and scatters and wastes all man's best and highest faculties, in which his spiritual life consists, and keeps him in a wretched, degraded state, ever degenerating from, and more and more losing sight of, the great ends for which he was made,—which are to love and serve and strive after his God. And if, during the prevalence of this

carnal mind, he be called out of the present state of preparation into the final state, then will and must pass upon him that awful thing which is known to us as eternal death, the utter and irrecoverable breaking up of the spirit, as the body is broken up by natural death. There will be, however, this weighty difference,—that the body dissolves into its elements, and is at rest,—whereas the spirit can never perish; that the body at variance with itself cannot stand, but the spirit at variance with itself shall stand for ever,—shut out from God whom it loved not, and sought not,—and face to face with conscience, which pleaded in vain in life, and shall accuse for ever through eternity. The carnally minded shall surely die. They were placed here for high and noble purposes, and they have chosen low and mean ones; they were put here to do good, and they have done no good; they were sent into the world to fight God's battle, and they have become base deserters; the enemy's gold, the enemy's banquets, and the enemy's flattery, have won the hearts which should have beaten true beneath the Christian's armour—and the enemy's camp is their home. They were sent here to strive upward by grace sought and found,—to put on Christ,—His blood, as their passover-rescue and life-warrant,—His righteousness, by the transforming influence of His indwelling Spirit,—and they have cast Him behind them,—dis-

obeyed His precepts, dishonoured His Person, disavowed His service. What can await those who thus frustrate all the best ends of their being, but misery and ruin?

Now this all know, and all more or less acknowledge. When God comes among men an unbidden guest — when, for instance, in the midst of the world's selfishness or pleasure, a fellow-creature is suddenly summoned to meet his Maker, how awful all acknowledge it to be; how do men feel the fearful incongruity of the employment and the event. Here is our confession; and not only thus is it testified, but in abundance of ways besides. The moment God's judgments are around or on them, the moment they are sick, or in danger, or in sorrow, these men adopt the very maxims of which their lives were the denial, again perhaps to deny them, when the judgment is forgotten.

“Ye shall not surely die:”—“Heaven and earth shall not pass away, but God's words shall pass away.” These are the tempter's fallacies, with which he deludes the carnally minded. They can hear and consent to the awful truths of the Gospel; they can come here Sunday after Sunday, and be told that Christianity is not a form of words, nor a cluster of opinions, but a struggle for life and to escape death,—and yet contentedly go their way, and devise their schemes for pleasure and advancement, as

if Christ had never died, and God existed not ; as if they had no souls to save, no neighbours to edify, no God to glorify ; and simply for this reason,—because they have persuaded themselves, or rather Satan has persuaded them, that they shall *not* surely die—that God's word is an exaggerated account of things—that by some lucky chance *they* shall manage to escape,—to get to heaven without any preparation for heaven,—to evade the pledged word and the unalterable justice and the eternal truth of the God of holiness,—to give *this* life to God's enemy, and yet inherit life eternal.

And would that I could say that these, as well as the last, are rare in our Christian congregations. Would that we were so far advanced in true civilization, that the carnally minded were as much avoided and put to silence as the open and notorious sinner—that Christian humility and unobtrusiveness and self-denial were held in honour, and the vulgar tinsel of pomp and display of wealth and luxury held, as it deserves to be, in utter contempt. I trust and believe that such a day *will* come, at least in Christian society, when of those who call themselves disciples of Christ a far greater number than at present will spend more on God's work and less on themselves—but the day is *not yet* come, and among you who hear me, the solemn caution is continually needed, “To be carnally minded is death:” if you live

for this world, you shall surely die; the only way to eternal peace and life is to live above the world, to mortify self, to wrestle with the tempter and cleave to Christ,—to learn that His example is your pattern, His precepts your rule; to be filled with the inward consciousness that heaven and earth are fast passing away, but His words shall never pass away.

But yet again. God hath said, “He that hath the Son, hath life; and HE THAT HATH NOT THE SON OF GOD, HATH NOT LIFE;” *i. e.* “If ye have not the Son of God, ye shall surely die.” We believe our Bibles: these words are in them. Now how many of us have any persuasion of the reality of this sentence of death? How many have cared enough about it, to ascertain what it is *to have the Son of God?* to ask themselves whether, in order to escape from the sentence, it be not necessary to have something more than a decent outward life, something more than deeds of charity and mercy, something more than regularity in religious duties? whether this having the Son of God be mere words, or a living fact? Let us enquire somewhat into this matter also. To HAVE—to possess or hold—can such an expression be used of an ordinary historical character, however true to us are his existence and acts? Can we be said to have king David, to have St. Paul? But we are said to have the Son of God. Well then, it is not a mere historical belief in Christ,

however entire and unwavering that belief may be; for we believe in these others, as matter of historical fact, as completely as we believe in Him. To have or possess Christ, is something far beyond this. And on it eternal life depends. God has declared this; do we believe it in our inner hearts? If so, should we not be all anxiously enquiring "How am I to possess the Son of God?" But men do not enquire thus. The words themselves are received with indifference; the whole subject is put aside, and treated not as the most momentous which can engage our attention, but as one belonging to theology, and not to practical life. Men flatter themselves, that *without* this possession of the Son of God, they shall not surely die. Bear with me, while I remind you how this matter stands. The Son of God came into our world to taste death for every man; to bear your condemnation and mine, and infuse into you and me His Spirit, to renew us in holiness, that we might partake the divine nature and glory. And we, without Him, are dead in trespasses and sins, incapable of pleasing God, or of standing before Him. Now God has created every one of us separately responsible; no man can bear another's burden, but every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Christ's work then cannot be put upon or appropriated to any man vicariously, or by a society, or by a minister, or by an ordinance, but must be applied to every

living man by his own personal act, conscious and willing; every sinner must come to Christ by and for himself, and strive after and gain this possession of the Son of God by personal application to Christ; by personal entering into the fact, not that Christ was born and died and rose again ages ago, but that Christ was born to be God manifest in HIS flesh, and died to cleanse that sinful flesh and soul and spirit from all stain of sin,—that Christ lives to be HIS Redeemer, HIS OWN personal Saviour, HIS OWN purchaser from dead works to serve the living God; so that he is Christ's, and Christ is his; he possesses the Son of God in His fulness, as the saviour from sin and the Sanctifier unto life. And with Him he possesses life eternal;—first, by the very nature of things, for HE IS LIFE, and none who are His shall die for ever, being one spirit with Him, branches of Him, members of His Body; and then by the covenant promise of the Father: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life."

But whosoever has not by his own personal act taken Christ as his, has not life, and must certainly die eternally;—first, by the very nature of things, for the desire for God has never been awakened in his heart, the guilt of sin has not been removed from him, nor its power over him broken; and then by solemn declarations of

the God of truth: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, for the wrath of God abideth on him."

How then stands it with us as to this declaration of God, which we read and receive? Is it not a notorious fact, that a very considerable portion of those who are known as Christians have no notion of this personal possession of Christ—think they can do very well without it, and put by God's sayings as unreal, and this sentence of death as an unreasonable one? Are there not thousands who think themselves secure in the mere membership of the Church—who mistake being dedicated to Christ in infancy for being devoted to Christ in life, baptism by water for sanctification by the Spirit? Are there not thousands who would substitute mere regularity in religious duties for the new birth unto God—who are putting the act of prayer, or the sacraments, or the ministry, or the Bible, or some secondary thing, in the place of Christ Himself, and flattering themselves that they have life, when they do not possess the Son of God?

Here again we have the same device of the tempter,—and the harder to detect and repel, the higher up in the spiritual life its influence reaches. It is far more difficult to persuade the self-righteous man than the sinner. He has got beyond the mere terrors of conscience, and the first impressions of a soul turning to God; he has received the Gospel in its inte-

grity; knows Christ, as he supposes, and believes in Him; but on the very threshold of the church of the faithful, he stands a deceived man, discrediting the solemn warning of God, and making sure of that eternal life, which abides only in Christ, whom he has not.

We have now seen this form of the deceitfulness of sin in three several cases: in the open sinner,—in the carnally minded,—and in the professedly religious who possess not Christ for themselves. These illustrations may serve to shew you how wide-spread the mischief is; to remind you that the heart is deceitful above all things, and put you on your guard in a matter of such vital importance. There are some things where a mistake may be venial; the eating of meats and the keeping of days, are stated by the Apostle not to affect a man's spiritual state for the better or the worse; but how can a mistake be venial, when it affects the fundamental conditions of eternal life or eternal death? How can a deceit be unimportant, which is the exact copy of that which wrought the ruin of us all? How can a man be safe, who sets himself against God? "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks:" and though Satan may say "Thou shalt not surely die," yet in the end God's word shall stand, and God's wisdom be justified.

What remains, then, but that we meet boldly

all such devices of the tempter with a simple unwavering acceptance of what God really has said—with the noble question of the holy youth of old, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

For remember, Christian brethren, that we have much to lose, if it be not straitly and jealously watched. Our first parents had their primal estate of innocence and happiness:—the goodly garden, with its sinless bowers, and never-fading blooms, and above all, God’s presence and God’s voice to hallow and bless it; but we have more than this: one greater Man hath restored us, and regained the blissful seat—the same God who said “Thou shalt surely die,” hath out of that death brought love and atonement and redemption, and now says “Thou shalt surely live.” He is now our reconciled Father in Christ. He now invites you, guilty and outcast worker of sin; you, carnally-minded children of the world; you, who have the church and the sacraments and the Bible, but have not Christ; yea, every lost son and daughter of Adam, to take freely of the water of life and live—to look by faith to Him and be saved—to ask Him, with the living yearnings of the heart, for His Spirit, and be dwelt in by Him, and made like Him, and received up to Him when your work on earth is done.

Yes, dear brethren in Christ, mysterious as the history of our Fall is, its greatest wonder is this,—that God out of ruin hath brought forth fresh beauty; out of man's defeat, His victory; out of death, life glorious and eternal. We have lost Eden; our brightest flowers fade in the gathering; but we have an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved for us. The crown is fallen from our heads, for we have sinned; but there is laid up for us a better crown of glory, which the Lord will give to them that love His appearing.

THOU SHALT SURELY LIVE, is now the divine proclamation to man's world. Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world! Believe on Him and live! No longer is the way to the tree of life guarded, "with dreadful faces thronged, and fiery arms;" the angelic watch have been summoned to sing glory to God and peace on earth and good will towards men, and have become ministering spirits to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation; the flaming sword is extinguished, and the new and living way to the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus.

O brethren, whether God speak of death or of life, listen not to His and your enemy, but listen to Him. Give Him your hearts—to hate what He forbids—to love what He loves; to die

to sin and the world and self; to live to Him and for Him, that you may live with Him—accepted in the Son, sanctified by the Spirit, glorified by the Father,—to whom, one God, be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

1854.

1 COR. xiii. 13.

“ And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity.”

THE Apostle is writing to the Corinthians of the use and abuse of spiritual gifts. They were well used, when exercised for the edification of man and for God's glory ; they were abused, when exercised for emulation or display. Their abuse did not however constitute them worthless ; he recommended his Corinthians to covet earnestly the best gifts. But on the other hand, neither could their most profitable use render them the first objects of a Christian's desire. There was a more excellent way than to be highly gifted. There was one Christian grace, without which all others were nothing. And here let us strive to enter into the mind of the Apostle as he writes. Those who have studied most the character of St. Paul, know

him as a man of earnest and fervid temperament; deeply penetrated with all that concerned his mighty spiritual work; bearing in his inmost heart the welfare of the churches which he had founded; enthusiastic in his hopes of them, and feeling with proportionate grief the pangs of disappointment when they fell short of those hopes. And all this was not from the mere love of success, which is common to us all in all our schemes,—still less because he sought his own personal distinction or advancement; but simply and entirely because he was devoted to his great work; because all the energies of a mind of unusual power, all the affections of a heart of wonderful depth, were concentrated upon one object, the glory of Christ Jesus his Lord, through whom the world was crucified to him, and he to the world. In his own remarkable words, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: the life which I live in the flesh is by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me¹.” And such a soul, with all its powers of intellect, and all its deep springs of love and hate and fear and hope, was pent in a shattered and feeble body. The shock on the road to Damascus, the wrestlings with and final victory over the pride of the convinced Pharisee, the three years of prayers and tears and revelations in Arabia, the toils and journeys and persecutions and perils of many years since, the constant wearing

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

anxiety of the care of all the churches,—these had all told on his bodily frame, and the infirmity which was in his flesh became to him a matter of earnest prayer for its removal, and of apology and claims for sympathy when addressing his converts. Let us follow such a person, as he writes this part of his Epistle. He had preached at Corinth the Gospel of peace and love. For a year and six months he had been among them: time enough to see them grounded and settled in the faith, and to have their spiritual welfare thoroughly bound up with his own. But he hears of them a report painful in the extreme. All is contention, division, emulation; gifts bestowed for far nobler ends, served only to provoke mutual jealousy and contempt. Under mingled feelings of deep affection and bitter disappointment he writes to them this noble Epistle. With that many-sidedness which characterizes only the very first and greatest minds, and which lesser minds not comprehending, call inconsistency, he pours forth his heart to them as if they had never erred, while at the same time he inveighs against their errors with indignation, taunts them with unsparing irony, and threatens future severity in the exercise of his apostolic power among them. On such a spirit so deeply wounded, so loving, and so reproofing, rises, in the midst of dealing with the contentions and littlenesses of the Corinthian church, the vision of that

more excellent way of LOVE. He contemplates the calmness, the self-sacrifice, the inestimable worth, the enduring glories of charity. All else is valueless in comparison with it; all else is nothing if void of it. All gifts, all knowledge, all teaching, shall vanish away before the perfect state which shall be revealed; but in it Love shall abide, and have there first its entire work. Full of these thoughts, he quits his immediate subject, and breaks forth into a panegyric of Love. He displays its perfections in words unequalled in the literature of the world. In sweetness, in power, in accuracy, in eloquence, no description has ever approached this one. We have in it, so to speak, the very crowning fruit of the highest excellence of the spirit of man penetrated by the Spirit of God. At the same time it may be well to observe, how completely it is distinguished from the language of Him who spake as never man spake. No where in all His discourses is there the slightest approach to what we know as human eloquence. His language is His own; childlike in its simplicity, unfathomable in its depth of divine knowledge. But here, while we believe the Holy Spirit to have dwelt in and instigated the writer, the language is essentially human; human eloquence of the highest order; careful and exact in arrangement, exquisite in sweetness of thought and diction, cultivating all the accessories whereby attention is secured, plea-

sure given, feeling stirred, impression made permanent. The inspired Apostle speaks as one looking upward; on earth, and longing for heaven: while the divine Saviour speaks as one looking downward; in heaven, and teaching us on earth.

Our text forms the conclusion of the description. And I have chosen it for a twofold reason: to impress upon you the conclusion as the Apostle draws it,—and also that I may endeavour to make clear to you the meaning of the words themselves, which is very often misunderstood. To this latter I will first apply myself. I believe I am correct in saying, that the general understanding of these words has been, that Faith, Hope, and Charity are the three great Christian graces, in distinction from those gifts which have been spoken of,—tongues, prophesying, knowledge; that of these three, Faith and Hope shall pass away and disappear in the perfect state, while Love shall, as the greatest of the three, abide for ever. At least, such is the view familiarized to us by the well-known lines of one of our popular poets²:

“ When constant Faith and holy Hope shall die,
One lost in certainty, and one in joy,
Then thou, more happy power, fair Charity,
Triumphant sister, greatest of the Three,
Thine office and thy nature still the same,
Lasting thy lamp, and unconsumed thy flame,
Shalt stand before the host of heaven confest,
For ever blessing, and for ever blest.”

² Prior.

Beautiful as these words are, I have no hesitation in saying that their writer has entirely misunderstood the Apostle's meaning, and that they would deprive his conclusion of half its power as an expression of the excellence of Love.

Let us go back a few verses, and endeavour to indicate the train of thought. After describing the moral qualities of love, he passes to another of its glories, "*Love never faileth.*" In this it is distinguished from all gifts, which are characterized thus : "but be there prophecys, they shall be done away ; be there tongues, they shall cease ; be there knowledge, it shall be done away." And then the reason is given : "for we know in part, and we prophecy in part ; but when perfection shall have come, that which is in part shall be done away." These gifts are but fragmentary ; small portions of a great whole, which shall one day be put into our possession ; and then, by that very fact, the fragmentary knowledge and the fragmentary teaching shall be swallowed up, and shall cease. He next illustrates this by the analogy of the child's ideas and words, as compared with those of the mature man. "When I was a child I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I judged as a child ; but now that I am become a man, I have brought to an end the ways of the child." Then he redoubles his reason, grounding it afresh on the obscurity, as well as fragmentary nature, of all earthly know-

ledge. "For now we see through a mirror (*i. e.* like those who see an object reflected in, and seen apparently *through*, one of the imperfect metallic mirrors of the ancients,—blotted and obscured) in a riddle (the dark sayings of the written word, which we cannot understand), but then (in the perfect state hereafter) face to face: now I know in part, but then I shall thoroughly know even as I was (during this life) thoroughly known (by God)."—And now we have done with the imperfect and the transitory. Gifts and knowledge are proved to be but for a time; excellent during our present fragmentary and dark state, but no longer existing when completeness and light shall succeed to it. And what does the Apostle add,—as the conclusion to the whole,—the final and most glorious exaltation of Love? "All that abide for ever, are THESE THREE, FAITH, HOPE, LOVE; but THE GREATER OF THESE IS LOVE." There are three Christian graces, as contradistinguished from all imperfect and transitory gifts,—which shall never pass away, but abide for ever; which in the perfect state shall constitute between them the character of the glorified children of God. Those three are Faith, Hope, and Love. But of these three greatest, which no perfection of eternity shall ever supersede or absorb, the greater is Love: not the only enduring one when the others have passed away; that, though high praise, would

not be so high as is here intended ; but of the three enduring ones, the greatest : first in comparison, not only with the passing gifts of time, but with the enduring graces of eternity ; not only a never-fading flower as contrasted with all ours which fade, but of the immortal blooms which “ flower aloft, shading the fount of life,” itself the brightest and the fairest.

And notice before we pass on, that I set this meaning before you, not as one among others which may be taken, but as the one absolutely required by the Apostle’s words ; not as matter of opinion, but as a correction of an error. When a passage is doubtful, and of many interpretations I recommend to you that one which I believe to be best, I will not fail to inform you that it is so. But in this case, it is otherwise. The Apostle lays down a broad distinction between the things which *pass away*, and the things which *remain*. The things which pass away in the perfect state, are the gifts which he mentions : the things which remain are Faith, Hope, Love ; but of these, Love is the greatest.

And now having put before you the right sense of the words, their matter itself calls for our attention. Faith, Hope, and Love are said to abide for ever in the future state of glory ; and of these, Love to be the greatest. Let us endeavour to explain this.

First, FAITH abides for ever. But how can

faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, remain in the very presence of the realities themselves? There, we shall see face to face. It is clear then that faith cannot be altogether the same as here. But in every essential point, it will be the same. For what is the ground of faith? What leads me to act on God's word, though I have never seen God, have never heard His voice? Is it not, that I trust God,—that I am contented to leave myself in His hands, that I have confidence in His doing all things well? Is not this the essence of faith in ordinary life? Is it not that we trust one another, and have confidence in men doing their duty, and so we leave important matters to be transacted for us by others, having faith in them, as we express it? And in this its ordinary sense, will not faith remain in our new and higher state of being? Will not entire and unwavering trust in God form a component of the character of the saints in glory—a confidence compared to which the most perfect assurance ever attained here below is but doubt—an entire resting for the present and for the future on His wisdom and His love,—of the perfect value of which we know nothing here? And regard it also in this light. The highest glorified saint will be but a finite being; immeasurably beneath the Father of spirits in every one of His unapproachable perfections. And thus, in contemplating and seeking after

Him, though no bar will be interposed; though we shall see face to face, yet from the very nature of things there must always be much above us, always in the higher sense a living by faith, even in the most exalted of the inheritors of glory. Faith will thus not be lost in certainty, simply because the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are not bare facts, to be apprehended by the mind and exhausted,—but living and unfathomable truths, to exercise all man's renewed powers to all eternity. Faith shall not die, just because Faith is not necessarily bound up with imperfection. We *know* in part: mere fragments here and there of a grand whole—and when that grand whole is revealed, it will supersede the fragmentary knowledge. We *teach* in part—only what we know and can give forth—and in that state men shall not say one to another, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know Him, from the least even to the greatest. But we do not believe in part, nor do we trust in part. All that God is pleased to reveal, we receive; on His everlasting truth and holiness and justice and mercy our trust is reposed. These are elements, not of change, but of endurance; and therefore when knowledge shall be done away, and tongues and prophesying shall cease, faith shall remain. And O how different from that which we now know by the name. Here, it is a wonder to be recorded in songs of triumph, if

by faith a few have lived above the world, and endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Here, if we look back on our course and find a few solitary acts which have been the fruits of faith, we are well content. But there it will be the living spring of every thought, the pervader of every plan, the undisturbed foundation on which the soul will ever rest in all its long and glorious upward progress. For doubt not, brethren, that a progress there will be in that blessed future state. God has given us lofty purposes, aspiring thoughts, hunger and thirst after advancement. The purer the spirit, the more refined by grace, the more ripened by experience,—the more does it sigh after the perfect likeness of Christ. Do we imagine that this likeness, according to the full capacity of each man, can be put on in an instant? that all the manifold perfections of God, in all their illustrations by creation, by providence, by grace, will be put into the possession at once of the glorified soul? I cannot think so; but firmly believe that that state will be as the present is, not indeed a struggle with infirmity, and sin, and death—these will for ever have been removed,—but as the present is, a striving ever upward after more knowledge of God, more love to God, more active obedience to God; and that this will continue, without a hindrance from temptation or from sin or from infirmity, for ever. And of this advance, faith

is the condition and basis. Faith then will abide for ever.

And if Faith, then Hope. We are created to live and endure and be cheered by Hope. Evermore we place before us a better and a higher condition than our present one, and on the possibility of its attainment our spirits dwell with an earnest longing. We can imagine only one condition, from which hope is for ever shut out; but one place, over the portal of which is inscribed, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." But in heaven, where the spirit shall be refined and quickened and exalted to the utmost, shall the keenest of all its pleasures, the life of all its delights, the spur of all its exertions, be absent? Hope *disappointed* indeed there shall be none, for hope shall be based on certainty; the eye of the soul shall rest, not on the flitting visions of earthly bliss, but on the calm realities of perfect knowledge. Hope *deferred* there shall be none; no more sickness of heart at long waiting; for the state of trial will be over, the perfect work of patience will be accomplished, and the hand which here is often stretched out till it wearies and stiffens and cannot grasp the object which it has reached, will there have but to open and be filled. But hope in all its blessedness, in all its fulness of joy, shall abide for ever. It shall not be lost in joy, just because joy will not be one great pleasure once imparted, but springs

ever welling up afresh, pleasures at His right hand for evermore. The awakening to new delights and new faculties, shall bring with it new hopes also. Every one of those advances in knowledge and obedience and bliss, by which the purified spirit shall climb upward to God, shall be reached only to reveal far above us another resting place brighter and lovelier still; and with the new attainment shall be born the new desire. Nor think for a moment that hope is inconsistent with the rest that remaineth for the people of God; that its stir and effort will intrude on those holy sabbath hours of eternity; that its bright eye and buoyant step will be out of place in the deep calm of the kingdom of peace. No—for the rest of God's people is the perfect doing of His will; their sabbath is not indolence, but the entire carrying out of that service which is perfect freedom; their calm is not the stupor of the faculties, but their highest and most blessed exercise. It was only sin which was toil to them; which profaned their sacred things, and disturbed the calm of their souls. Where sin is for ever abolished, all is rest to them, all is sabbath, all is perfect peace. Hope then will abide for ever.

And Love—what need is there to prove that Love shall abide, in that state to which we are rightly accustomed to look as its first proper manifestation and only perfect example? All

that we have to shew is, that of these three love is the greatest.

It is the greatest by comparison with the others, first, because their chief work was accomplished when that higher state was entered, in which its chief work lies. Faith upheld the doubting, wavering, sinking soul, during the conflict here below. By faith, it was brought out of the state of guilt into justification before God. This was faith's greatest achievement. Through faith, it was kept by the power of God unto salvation. This was faith's lasting and noblest triumph. Faith will struggle no more in that final state; there are no more fiery darts of the wicked to quench, and therefore its shield is laid aside. Though it endures through eternity, yet its deeds are chronicled in time.

With Hope again, the case is similar. "It is good that a man should both patiently hope and wait for the salvation of God." This salvation, hope's greatest object, has been attained. Never will the soul again yearn so earnestly for any thing hoped for. Never again will hope so intensely possess it, as a principle ruling its thoughts and bringing forth fruit in its actions. Never again will it be able to be said, "Every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself."

But earthly love—alas! brethren, where and what is it? Where shall we look for the exem-

plification of the beautiful character which is portrayed in this chapter? Shall we seek it in the church of Christ, where we might most naturally expect it? Shall we find there bright examples of forbearance, of charity, of humility, of self-sacrifice? Alas! what is the history of the church, but the history of the world's hatreds more embittered, of the world's selfishness more intensified, of the world's pride made prouder still? In the records of the past ages of our era, where shall we turn for the most flagrant cruelties? To the history of the church. Where for the basest hypocrisies? Again, to the history of the church. Where, for those who exemplify the contraries of all the attributes of love here described,—for those who suffer not long, nor are kind, who envy, who vaunt themselves, who are puffed up, who behave themselves unseemly, who seek their own, who are easily provoked, who think all evil of all, who rejoice in iniquity, but rejoice not in the truth, who bear nothing, believe nothing, hope nothing, endure nothing? Where, but to that sad and dreary page, whereon are written the crimes, the strifes, the wars, the controversies of churchmen? Earthly love, what is it? At its best and warmest, a dangerous thing, which as soon as it has passed into bliss and begins to be the home of the spirit, and to lead it away from its God, is touched by His merciful hand, and withers

away; ever open to the intrusions of selfishness and passion, ever waited round by the subtle tempter, and turned into sin. Such was love here below. But there, its real work shall begin. Few are its triumphs on earth. We have but one real example of it, shining bright above all suspicion of taint: the love of Him who was born and suffered and died for His enemies. But there, all shall be like Him. Love shall reign supreme, and shall bear in its train "all thoughts, all passions, all delights," as its willing and active ministers. So that it is thus the greatest—in that their chief work belonged to earth, but its chief work belongs to heaven.

Again it is the greatest, inasmuch as Faith and Hope are but the conditions of the employment of the glorified; whereas Love is that employment itself. The results of their Faith and their Hope will be, to lead them on to new degrees and new exercises of Love. And as the end is greater than the means, so is Love greater than either of them. Again it is the greatest, inasmuch as it is the only one which is the character of God Himself. He is self-existent, and needs none to lean upon; perfect, and looks onward to no higher knowledge or bliss. God is not Faith, is not Hope; but God is Love. To study that Love, to illustrate it, to strive after likeness to it, to dive further and further into its depths, shall be the employ

of the blessed for ever. We can rise no higher. The greatest of these is Love—the one all-comprehending grace, which sums up the character of the redeemed, which completes their holy transformation, which unites them to the perfection of God.

May we, dear friends, be of the mind of the Apostle as regards this greatest of Christian graces. May we look upon all gifts and all knowledge and all so-called acts of charity, as entirely worthless, if void of the genuine spirit of love. May we remember, that the real test of true Christianity is not mere outward orthodoxy, nor mere regularity in religious duties, nor any degree of acquaintance with the doctrines and phrases of theology, but LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER. May we learn the difficult lesson of laying aside all selfishness, and pride, and haughty contempt for our meaner fellow-creatures, and humble ourselves not only on our knees before God, but in society before men, by suffering long and being kind, by bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things. And that, knowing the time: that we are entering on a period when it is more than probable that we shall no longer be able to be at peace with all men; when there will be those whom in our common conversation we shall call our *enemies*. Let us be careful how we allow the bitter and rancorous thoughts which naturally come with

such a name, to take possession of our hearts. Let us guard against unchristian thirst for vengeance at the intelligence of possible reverse, —against overbearing pride in the day of victory. Difficult as it is to love as Christians in time of peace, it is infinitely more difficult in time of war. Our temptations will be greater; may our grace be greater also; that whatever issue God in His Providence may give to the hitherto obscure way by which He is leading us, we may at least be victorious over ourselves; and in return for His many and signal blessings may shew that the great example of His Love has not been lost upon us; that feeling that Christ hath so loved us, we also love one another.

SERMON IX.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

1854.

MATT. iv. 1.

“Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”

WE have arrived at the season of Lent, marked by the Church as one of more than usual solemnity. We are taught by the character of her services, and the general practice of Christians, to devote our meditations at this time to the subject of our sinfulness and need of repentance. For this there is a twofold reason. It is the time which introduces the commemoration of Christ's sufferings for our sins. It is fitting therefore, that our thoughts should be turned towards the heinousness of those offences which crucified Him, that we may the better learn to glorify that exceeding love which brought Him here to suffer for them. Again, it is the season in which we actually come-

morate the time of trial which preceded His public ministry, during which He wrestled with the Tempter, and overcame him for us.

The necessity, uses, and process of His Temptation, being thus proposed to us as subjects of thought, naturally lead us to think of our own danger, and the conflict with the enemy which is set before us. In this, as in all things, He was our pattern. Those who are to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset them, and run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus the Author and finisher of their faith, may see by this history how He met and baffled the tempter; what weapons from the armoury of God He chose for the combat, and how He wielded them.

It is for this purpose that I have chosen our Lord's Temptation for the subject of our Sunday mornings' sermons during this Lent. I think I see in the various parts of it, abundant matter for our edification amidst the different spiritual dangers to which we are exposed; besides that the contemplation of Him in any part of His work of Redemption is at all times salutary for our souls.

May God bless our endeavour to make this solemn subject profitable.

I begin to-day with the Temptation itself in general: the account to be given of it as holding a place in the events of our redemption;

its ground and necessity; its possibility, and the form which it assumed.

Our Lord had now passed through that sinless infancy and youth, of which so little is revealed to us in Scripture. Thus much we know: that having emptied Himself of his glory, and become a veritable human child, He had during this time been increasing in wisdom as in age, and in favour with God and man; that He had been gathering round him all those accessions of experience and knowledge which ripen with our ripening years,—but with this weighty difference; that in Him they were unalloyed by sin; no vanity clouded the inner vision, no pride stifled the sense of right. He had grown up in the continually increasing consciousness of his mighty mission. His conviction in opening boyhood was, that He must be “among his Father’s matters;” the argument by which He enforced the necessity of his Baptism was, that “it became Him to fulfil all righteousness.”

On this latter occasion, the Father testified his acceptance of the perfect obedience of Jesus. He sent the Holy Spirit to anoint Him specially for his great office now about solemnly to open. He uttered from heaven His voice, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” From this time a new period of the Saviour’s life begins. He is no longer the retired dweller at Nazareth, subject to his

earthly parents. Full of the Holy Ghost, He is borne onward to his public ministry. God manifest in the flesh has been hiding his power till that flesh was mature for the mighty work which was to be done. The fulness of time is now come. But where shall that work begin? In which region of all the manifold wants and infirmities and sins of mankind shall the Redeemer's power first be proved? Let us examine how the case stood. The first Adam had met the tempter, and had fallen before him. Thus by man came sin, and by sin, death. But we have now one before us, who is the second Adam. No man since had been what Jesus was. Jesus was not in Person *a man*. He was in Person *one* throughout—the *Divine Son of God*. But He had taken the manhood into God. He had become not *a man*, but *man*; had taken human nature into His divine; and in that capacity, as the *God-man*, He was to work our redemption. By man was to come righteousness, and by righteousness, life. It was necessary, therefore, that this Man Christ Jesus should in His own Person establish righteousness for us. Now where, and what, were we? What was that nature of ours which He took on Him, with regard to righteousness before God? It had fallen from God. But God and ourselves were not alone concerned in that fall. A subtle spirit intervened, by whose temptation the first Adam was seduced. Hu-

man nature was thus led captive by the devil at his will. Individuals, families, nations, whole portions of the globe, had been brought by him into degradation and moral pollution. This foe the Redeemer came to vanquish. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." And His conflict with the adversary must be a *human* conflict, begun where it is begun in us. The enemy must enter by the same avenues of sense: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, these must be the propensities which he expects to lay hold of in our blessed Redeemer, and in these he must be foiled. In order to this end, the encounter must be personal and close; the attack made by the enemy must be a direct one, on the soul of Jesus Himself. The scene in Paradise must be acted over again, with all the subtlety of the serpent, all his enticements and lies. And as the first Adam fell, so the second Adam must stand. As the first Adam, containing all of us, who are united to him by fleshly descent, brought himself and his race into contact with disobedience and sin,—so the second Adam, containing in Himself all of us by His comprehensive taking on Himself of our nature, must bring that nature into contact with obedience and righteousness. And though it is true, that His whole course was in some sense this conflict with Satan, yet here the first and decisive blow was struck.

This was the crushing of the serpent's head : the rest of the combat was but the bruising of the heel of the Seed of the woman. From this time, with one exception, the recurrence of the hour and power of darkness in Gethsemane, Satan attacks the Head no longer. That divine Personality of our Lord, impregnable in its unity with the Godhead, that human soul, penetrated even to its inmost depth of agony and infirmity with the firmness of holy purpose nourished in sinless consistency, these, for the most part, are the subjects of his attacks no longer. Nor are his attempts made directly on Christ Himself. Henceforth he aims at His human Body of infirmity, and by his agents, the Jewish rulers, and the Roman power, and the faithless Apostle, brings Him to rejection and cruel mocking, and a death of shame and pain. But all this was only the carrying out of the victory now gained by our Lord. That Death was His glory, and the crowning defeat of the Tempter. On that cross hung the victim of Satan's enmity : but what was really accomplished ? The death of the cross was the serpent lifted up, by which the serpent lost his power ; it was the payment of man's penalty by Him who was made in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and by that payment, the bond of sin was cancelled, and the captives were set free. But the triumph thus for ever accomplished on the cross was established in its central and

most important point, in the wilderness. And this is the first and greatest reason why Jesus was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil,—that He might, as the inclusive Head of mankind, wrestle in His inner spirit with that Tempter who was as yet our conquering foe and cruel tyrant, and thus might vanquish him for every one of us, so that *His* victory might be *ours*, in all its glorious consequences ; so that they who put on Christ by faith, might put on this His victory, and stand above Satan and all his devices, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, more than conquerors through Him that loved them. This was the chief purpose in the Temptation of Jesus. And beyond doubt our great poet was right when, being about to treat of Paradise regained, he selected out of all the triumphs of our Lord, this one, as the recovery of that blissful state which by the malice of Satan and our own weakness we had lost.

It was necessary then that the Saviour should undergo this conflict, as a part of our redemption.

But various subordinate reasons may be imagined why such a temptation should take place, and be recorded for our benefit. Every insight into the character and motives of One who is so much to all of us as to be our Mediator with God, our Saviour from sin, and our ensample of a holy life, must be of the highest importance.

To know that He was void of all selfishness, of all vainglory, of all ambition,—that He had been tried by every one of these, and had stood the trial, tends highly to enhance our faith in Him as the anointed Christ of God; enables those who are to go forth in His name to teach all nations, to shew Him to them as the humble self-sacrificing Redeemer, who came not to seek his own, but to seek and save that which was lost—not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him.

But there can also be no doubt that the temptation of our Lord occurred as it did, and has been related as it stands in Scripture, to serve as a model for us, who are still wrestling with our subtle foe. His temptations are ours also. Distrust of our heavenly Father, presumption, worldly ambition, these sooner or later beset us all in one form or other. And it is of the highest value to us, to trace His conduct under their solicitations, that we may make it our own also; to mark how He handles the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, that we may learn and practise its use for ourselves.

Let us turn now to another important question: that which regards the POSSIBILITY of this temptation. Granted, we may suppose it said, that such a conflict with and victory over the tempter was necessary for our Lord,—yet how could it in Him assume the form of TEMPT-

ATION TO SIN? Was He not SINLESS? And how could the motions towards sin, which surely constitute the essence of temptation, and give it all its force, exist in Him, who was one in will and action with His heavenly Father? Nor is such a question to be put from us as idle and profitless. It is well for us to study the Divine character of our Lord on all sides, and to get as consistent a view of it as we may be able; for the better we understand it, the clearer will our faith be, the more intelligent our apprehension of its great object. In answering, then, this question, we must bear in mind first, how entirely, in our Lord's case, all these solicitations were *from without*. The same may be said of the temptation of our first parents. No motions towards sin can *spring up in* a person who is sinless. And it has been well observed by one of the deepest writers of modern Germany, that if, as some pretend, the history of the temptation were nothing but a figurative representation of thoughts which were suggested and repelled *in the mind of Jesus Himself*, He never could have been our Saviour. If such springs of evil were *in Him*, He never could be the spotless Lamb of God who knew no sin, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. But it is manifest from this history, that they were not in Him; they originated without Him,—from the adversary personally present, who came to Him, and spoke to Him. So important is it to keep

the Scripture narrative in its simplicity. But when this point is established, it may again be reasonably asked, How could such suggestions become to our Lord matters of real conflict and struggle of soul, if they were merely darts which struck on the bright surface of the shield, and fell blunted and powerless? Surely, in order for them to have been genuine trials, they must have found some answer within Him—must have presented themselves at least with some plausibility, which in *our* case deceives us and we fall, but in His, failed to deceive Him. And if such response was found in Him to the suggestions of the Tempter, we have again not a sinless nature, but one containing the motions towards sin. The answer to this is easy. Every one of these temptations was grounded upon some course of feeling or desire which was in itself perfectly legitimate. Take only the first of them as an instance. Our Lord had fasted, and was an hungered. So far there was no sin, but the infirmity of that nature which He had taken on him. The Tempter suggested to Him to work a miracle in order to serve that hunger. The suggestion so far found an echo in Him, that his ‘human Body, crushed and bound down by exhaustion,’ pleaded for its wants to be supplied. To this pleading *one of us* might have yielded, because in us it would be not merely the physical plea of an exhausted body, but the ungodly and selfish suggestion of a

sinful body, in aid of the tempter without; whereas in Him, the plea of the human body, and the human soul which shared in its weakness, had in it no ungodliness, no selfishness, no departure from his Father's will, but was met by the entire self-resignation of his spirit, and the unclouded consciousness of his place in the Father's counsels and care. And that this view is the true one, we may see by observing that other occasion when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Then, the longing of the flesh is expressed by Him in words — "Father, remove this cup from Me;"—but is instantly overborne by the unshaken determination of the spirit—"nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

The *possibility*, then, of the Temptation of Jesus lay in this,—that the Tempter found in Him the same physical tendencies and the same desires which had in our case furnished the inlets to sin. On these he wrought. The enfeebled bodily frame of our Redeemer,—the challenge to prove his divine Sonship—the subtle use made of the fact that He came into the world to be a King,—all these seemed to promise success, but all these were tried in vain; for the enemy had NOTHING IN HIM. The human nature, which in Adam had fallen from God, was here impenetrably guarded by its union with the Godhead.

Next in this preliminary and general sermon

let us notice the *nature* of these temptations. Though they are threefold,—the first to the satisfying of bodily appetite, the second to the proof of His heavenly Father's care, the third to the winning speedily the kingdom over the world,—yet one ruling idea pervades them all, and it is this,—the *accomplishing the lawful ends of His mission by unlawful means*; the descending from the high ground on which He stood as the Servant of God, the Son anointed and sent by the Father,—one who came into the world not to do his own will, but the will of Him who sent him,—to the low and selfish ground of one who used supernatural power to serve his own appetite,—who put his Father's guardian care to a vain and idle test to serve his own vanity,—who became a traitor to the true King of heaven and earth to serve his own ambition. The whole was a subtilly contrived and consistent endeavour to divert our Saviour from the spiritual course of becoming Lord of the dead and the living, into another and a carnal course; from that path which, steep as it was and unpromising, was the one chosen by divine wisdom for the salvation of the world, into that which, however it might surely issue in discomfiture and the enemy's triumph, was yet for the present level and alluring. It was a bold and crafty attempt to set aside the true Messiahship of Jesus, the essence of which was, to come in his Father's name,—and the destiny of

which was to be rejected and despised, and to win its spiritual way through the offence of the cross; and to substitute for it another false Messiahship, whose character it would be to come in its own name—which might be received by the Jews, and enjoy a short-lived popularity, and a rapid access to fame.

How directly such an attempt contravened all that our Lord came on earth to teach and to do, we may see both by his replies at this time, and by the fervency with which on another occasion He rebuked his Apostle Peter, who for a moment acted the part of the Tempter in dissuading Him from his purposed sufferings and death. At once our Lord, who had but just commended him for the clearness of his confession of faith in Him, meets the hateful suggestion with "Get thee behind me, Satan."

His replies will furnish us, please God, with the subjects of our succeeding sermons. I will now for a moment remark upon them generally. Not only are they all made in the same spirit of holy obedience to the Father's will, but further, they are all chosen from the written word of God, and all from *one portion* of that word. Nor is this accidental, any more than any other saying or act of our blessed Lord. There was deep meaning in both selections. He answers not from Himself—He adduces no words of his own, because the very object of the temptation being to divert Him from his course as

the sent of the Father, His resistance against that temptation was, to set Himself in the very central point of His true position on earth, and simply to allege against His adversary, "IT IS WRITTEN:" "God hath said."

Again, the point offered to Him by the tempter was this: out of His present position of humiliation, he chooses just that one thing which would tend to make Him forget the work which He had come on earth to do: "If thou be the Son of God." The taunt amounted to this: "Thou, the eternal Son of God, in hunger, in danger, in humble station? Use thy divine power—prove thy Godhead." In reply to this, our Lord casts himself back, not on his great design of redeeming love, which He deigns not to lay out before the adversary, but simply on the conditions of that human state which He had taken upon him. He was here as man to fulfil all righteousness. As man, He was one of God's chosen people Israel; an Hebrew of Hebrews, circumcised the eighth day,—bound by the covenant of the Law. To that Law therefore He betakes himself for his maxims of obedience. It was his rule, and from it all his replies are taken. Thus his position again was impregnable. Moses, the appointed lawgiver of Israel, had uttered these commands by divine appointment; and by them his life as an Israelite was shaped in holy subjection.

You will see by these few notices of the general subject, how full the history of our Lord's temptation is of suggestions for interesting and profitable thought.

We too, in our appointed places, are called on to suffer temptation; each of us led by God's providence into positions where our faith will be tested, and our constancy put to the trial; and a special blessing is pronounced on those who endure it. "My brethren, count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him¹."

May we, comforted by knowing that the Lord Jesus was tempted before us, gifted with the same spirit of wisdom to resist the Tempter which was in Him, be each one of us faithful unto death, and share His glorious victory!

¹ James i. 2, 12.

SERMON X.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

1854.

MATT. iv. 4.

“ Jesus answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

I REMARKED last Sunday morning on the Temptation of our Lord, in a general and introductory sermon. I spoke of its necessity for Him in his work of Redemption, and consequently for us,—of its possibility, of its form and character.

We come to-day to treat of its first portion, and to enter with more particularity of detail into the nature of the attack, and the method by which Jesus repelled it.

For forty days and nights had He been alone in the wilderness. St. Mark and St. Luke inform us, that during the whole of that time

He was tempted of the devil; and the former perhaps indicates one method of temptation which may have been tried, in adding, "and He was with the wild beasts." It may have been attempted by terror to shake the Redeemer's firmness of purpose. But of this Scripture leaves us in uncertainty; and it is not till the end of the forty days, that we are permitted to witness the forms which his Temptation assumed. At that time we find Him exhausted with his long abstinence from food.) This probably He had not been, during the period itself. But now the wants of his human nature return upon him, and He is an hungered. In this hunger the Tempter found opportunity of access to him. And here let us remember what was before observed respecting this temptation, as applied to one who was sinless: that it arose entirely from without Him, being the suggestion of one who came to him and spoke to him—not as in our case, who have to contend with a sinful body, suggested from within, requiring only the presence of the opportunity to kindle the thought and desire of evil.

"The tempter came to Him and said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Jesus had been acknowledged at his baptism as the Son of God: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Shall the Son of God, thus recognized by the Father, the heir of all things, the

Lord and ruler of nature, be suffering personal want like one of the neediest of the sons of men? If He pleased to take human nature on him, that nature should be at least well provided for. Why suffer hunger, when the power to allay hunger was present?

I pause not now over the position in which our Lord places himself in all His replies to the Tempter, having treated it at some length in my last discourse; it may be sufficient to remind you that He answers not by any explanation of His work of redemption, but simply *as man*, subject to the law of God; as one who came not to do his own will, but the will of Him who sent Him; whose aim was not to serve Himself, but to serve God. The mystery of His eternal power and Godhead is not put forth in his replies; nor will He be dictated to by any in its exercise. It is a remarkable fact, that His very first miracle was strictly analogous to this suggested one, and that on that occasion also He repudiated the idea of performing it when urged upon Him by his mother. As He here altogether refuses to turn stones into bread to serve his own wants, so in Cana of Galilee He refused to turn water into wine at the bidding of another, but did so when His time was come, to supply the wants and minister to the happiness of others.

But it is mainly to His reply that I wish to direct your attention to-day. "Jesus answered

and said unto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This, like His other answers, is taken from the history of Israel in the wilderness; and the context in which it occurs is as follows¹: Moses is reminding all Israel of the judgments and mercies of their God. "Thou shalt remember," he says, "all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by all that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Israel, God's servant, His Son whom He had brought up out of Egypt, murmured for want of food in the wilderness. The people longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt. But God did not supply their want in the way in which they lusted. He gave them bread from heaven; miraculous food, so diverse from man's ordinary sustenance, that neither they nor their fathers knew what it was, and the only name which they could devise for it was *Ma Na*, "What is this?" And this He did, to teach

¹ Deut. viii. 2, 3.

them the true mystery of the creature's sustenance: that it is not by any quality inherent in bread, or in what we know in general as food, that our earthly bodies are sustained, but by God's creative and upholding power. God, it is true, has ordained in the common course of nature, that certain substances rather than others shall be fitted to assimilate to these our bodies, to repair their waste, and keep them in life; and so in our ordinary language we speak of ourselves as living upon these substances, and know them as food or provision, in distinction from other substances, which are not thus endowed. But this endowment is simply and entirely the gift and appointment of God; the course of nature is not inherent in the necessities of things, but is the continued fiat of His ever-present will. And when He pleases, He may and does suspend that course for His purposes. But whether it please Him to suspend it or not, man is entirely in His hands; we do not depend on bread for our life,—this is the godless and worldly view of the matter,—but we depend on God for our life. God has appointed, under all ordinary circumstances, that we should sustain life by the secondary means of earthly food; where therefore that food can be obtained, we are bound by lawful exertion to obtain it; such is the path which He has ordained for us to walk in, the legitimate employment of our industry,

the healthful exercise of our energy, and our hopes, and our desires. But where He has placed man under special bonds of duty, and pointed out before him a course of action higher and nobler than the mere sustaining of the body, He can and will nourish him in this course of duty; or even if it should in its fulfilment wear out and bring to dissolution this physical frame, He can and will provide for that man's true life in a better and more exalted sense. His real life, his real sustenance, is not to be found in bread alone, but in God's appointment, God's service, that which cometh out of the mouth of God: "Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good: dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

What a noble example have we of such a spirit in our blessed Lord. He came into the world to serve the Father; with a definite path of duty marked out before him. Though He was the Son of God, He submitted himself to hunger and pain, to tears and sorrow, to insult and rejection, rather than for one instant transgress the limits which He had marked out for himself. "Thinkest thou," He said to his over-ardent Apostle in the hour of His darkest trial, "that I could not pray to My Father, and He should presently send me twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scripture be fulfilled that thus it must be?" We can hardly in our imagination rise to so exalted a degree of

self-denying obedience as is exhibited in Him. Possessing the power at any moment to free himself from suffering, He yet meekly and firmly puts from him all temptation to do so. And what, brethren, was the result? We see clearly in His case, how the slightest deviation from his prescribed path, supposing it to have been possible, would have been fatal to the end which He came here to accomplish. We see how He, being the eternal Son of God manifested in the flesh for man's redemption, had His work to do on earth, and was upheld in that work and for that work by support that we know not of; how, according to His own saying, his meat was to do the will of Him who sent him, and to finish His work. And we see the glorious end. Though outward support failed, and the comforts of human life were withdrawn from Him; though his brethren believed not on Him, and his disciples forsook Him and fled; though his own rejected Him, and it seemed at last as if He were forsaken even of the Father Himself, yet all this was His path, not to ruin but to glory—not to defeat but to triumph. He lacked the bread of this world, but it was that He might feed this world with the bread of life. He was deprived of the comforts of this world, but it was that He might be the everlasting comforter of this world's mourners. He had not where to lay His head, but it was that He might prepare

everlasting mansions for His people. He, being God, lived as man, obeyed as man, hungered as man, wept as man, died as man; but it was that He might reign as man, the righteous and victorious Head over our renewed nature, the accepted of the Father, the Friend and Saviour of sinners. Thus He finished his course with joy and entered into His glory—thus by his rejection of all unworthy and secondary means of attaining his end, and following simply his Father's will, He shewed us that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

And we, brethren,—where do we stand, with regard to this great foundation truth of man's life? Each one of us has his appointed course to run—his line of duty marked out for him by God. None of us were sent here for nought. And that line of duty is one of exertion, of self-denial, of danger. No man was ever put into this world to take his ease. As our Lord had His work to do on earth, so have all we; and as His was a work of difficulty and sorrow and peril, so is ours. And say not for a moment, 'His work was necessary for a perishing world, mine is of no consequence.' Your work, and mine, and every man's, is as necessary to be done for its end, as was the Redeemer's. His was a work worthy of the divine Son of God: to save a sinful world,—to fill eternity with songs of joy,—to win for Himself a glorious

Church, a peculiar people, a multitude whom no man can number of those who have washed their robes and made them white in His blood,—this was His glorious work, proportioned to his Love, his Wisdom, his Power. Ours also is proportioned to our own place, and in that proportion, glorious even as His was. It is to rescue this wonderful frame of body, soul, and spirit from degradation and ruin; to turn our selfishness into self-denial, our human into divine,—to offer ourselves, our bodies, souls, and spirits,—a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God: to become, from the mean and contemptible children of the world, the accepted sons of God's own family; from the slaves of sin, and victims to the lusts of the flesh, to become kings and priests of our God, and reign with Him for ever and ever. Who that contemplates this body of ours with all its marvels of skill and comeliness, shall say that it is not a glorious work to save it for its noblest purpose;—to endow it with never-fading beauty and angelic dignity;—to clear the eye that it may gaze undazzled on the majesty of God, to calm the brow that it may reflect the peace of heaven, to nerve afresh the hands, withered in death, that they may never weary in the blessed works of eternity, to string anew the music of the tongue, long silent in the grave, that it may take its part in the chorus of immortal praise? Who that thinks on this soul

of ours, with all its faculties and affections, shall deny that it is a glorious work to carry it on to its higher and nobler uses,—to bear onward the memory with all its varied treasures into that world where its backward vision will be purged and made perfect, where we shall see all the way by which He hath led us, and know that He hath done all things well,—to secure for faith its noblest character of unwavering trust, for hope, eternal freedom from disappointment and delay, for love, its everlasting and perfect exercise? Who that surveys man's spirit, his peculiar and noblest endowment, with its upward eye of dependence on God, and its marvellous reflection of God's law in the conscience, shall doubt that it is a glorious work to free it for ever from the bondage which ties it down to the dust, and join it to the spirits of the just made perfect,—to cleanse it of all spot of guilt, of all earthly and selfish regards, and make it even as the Spirit of God, full of order and light and peace and joy, blessed, among the blessed? Who shall for a moment hesitate to say, that each of these is a work worthy of the energies of the best and wisest of the sons of men? And if each, then surely all together; the work of ensuring for body, soul, and spirit, a happy and everlasting life in the presence of God. Yet this work, glorious as it is, is the appointed work of every one to whom I now speak. Manifold are its

methods, various its conditions, unnumbered its opportunities; but the work is the same for all.

And why I press this upon you now is, because it is in and on account of this our work that the tempter comes to each of us, and tries to make us swerve from it into selfish and worldly courses. We have not, it is true, supernatural power to abuse; he does not say to us, "Command that these stones be made bread;" but we have each of us talents, faculties, worldly means, to be laid out on this our work. And the temptation comes to us in this form: take thy talents, take thy faculties, take thy worldly means, lay them out for thyself. With thy talents, make for thyself repute, make for thyself affluence; rise early, late take rest; tax thy bodily strength, thy mental energy, while they last; and all for self, to cut thy way into this crowded world, to be known, to be wondered at, to be worshipped by men. With thy faculties, thrive and be careful; look round thee, and watch thine opportunities; rise when others fall; thrust others down, that thou mayest rise; be not unwise, but circumspect; and all for self, that thou and thine may be promoted in society, and thought more of, and have friends among the great, and a name recorded in the annals of state and splendour. With thy worldly means, serve thyself; gather up all thy resources to make a show in society;

rob the poor, and rob thy Maker, to keep up a costly household, and a stately equipage, and a luxurious table; rob thy soul, and rob eternity, to promote thy sons to renown and emolument, and thy daughters to the hands of the wealthy and the titled;—yea, hazard all in this world and the next, to serve thyself; turn gold into pleasure, and coin thy soul into gold, rather than self shall be denied. These, brethren, these are our temptations; urged, and yielded to, day by day. And it is here, above all places, here, where the mighty heart of the world beats audibly, and where selfishness is less disguised perhaps than in any other place on earth, that we see all around us proofs of the success of these temptations, in causing men to swerve from the way that God has marked out for them, into self-serving and downward paths.

But in all of these, it is my place to remind you that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;” that it is not in talent, nor in fame, nor in abundance, that man’s real sustenance and real advancement consists; that these may pamper, but cannot sustain man; but what really sustains man, feeds him with bread everlasting, is this,—to be found in the way which the Lord his God has marked out for him, whether it be in what the world calls wealth, or poverty, whether in action or suffering, whether in a holy life, or a holy death.

And remember that by "the way which God has marked out," I do not mean merely to designate a man's station in life and its ordinary duties; but that definite path in which God would have all those to walk, who are followers of His blessed Son. No professed Christian can fulfil his ordinary duties in life acceptably to God without being a real Christian; because without justifying faith in Christ, it is impossible to please Him. Every one of you is bound to be a real Christian, taking Christ for his Lord and Master, living to Christ and living upon Christ, in humble faith and holy obedience. And as many as have never put on this character, have already yielded to this temptation. You are taking your time, which is His,—your powers, which are His,—your opportunities, which are His,—and with them you are serving yourselves and the world. You are avoiding trials and crosses and discomforts, which are inseparable from real discipleship to Christ, and instead of them choosing fair repute, and the good opinion of society, and personal ease; but is not all this the turning the stones of your desert path into bread, and forgetting that God's word is your bread, which has said, "If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me?"

But let us not forget that this answer of our Lord's, besides pointing out the plain course of duty to us all, offers much real consolation to

those Christians who are suffering for His sake. Has God allotted to any of us, in our spiritual life, distresses or conflicts? Has He called upon us to follow in the steps of His blessed Son, and to suffer with Him, before we reign with Him? Then will the tempter be busy about us as he was about Him, persuading us to be rid of our trial at any cost, to look on it as our enemy,—to seek by diversion of thought, by society, by pleasure, to forget it, and be as if it had never been. Has God's Holy Spirit bruised the soul with consciousness of the guilt of sin, and written bitter things against us in commencing His blessed work within? The tempter whispers false peace and security:—"Thy sins are not worse than those of others—take thy chance with the world—trouble not thyself, nor be afraid." But we know that sorrow for sin is the true path to joy—that the wholesome bread which our Father gives His children is at first bitter to the taste;—that the health of the soul consists not in saying peace when there is no peace, but in repentance however irksome,—for it is the way to Christ. And therefore we will not quench the convictions of sin, nor purchase security at the price of our faithfulness to Him who hath sent us here, but though He wounds us, yet will trust and serve Him.

Again, has God appointed to any of us to mourn, as being bereaved by His providence of the desire of our eyes? Do we miss some

beloved friend, and does all the world seem dark and dreary to us? Then the tempter intervenes, "If thou art the son of God, why art thou thus?" Would God ever subject His own, the children of His family, to cruel strokes like this of thine? Is it not manifest that He whom thou callest thy Father, is thine enemy, and not thy friend? Here too, the reply of our Saviour is an inexpressible consolation to us. Here too we may boldly answer, Man liveth not by social comforts alone; it is not earthly love, however sweet, which feeds the soul, but it is simple humble dependence on the will of Him, who in spite of all adverse appearances, is my Father and my Friend; is leading me onward through these thorny paths of bereavement and mourning, to His appointed end—the purification of my spirit to inherit His glory.

Thus is this answer of our Lord at the same time our warning and our comfort; our warning, that we labour not for that forbidden bread which this world offers us to lure us from obedience to our God and Father in Christ; and our comfort, in assuring us that the bread which He offers us, however unwelcome to our natural palate, is yet the bread of life.

May we, brethren, make it our meat and drink, as it was that of Him whom we follow, to do the will of God who has sent us here, and to finish His work. May we be found

ever firm and unshaken in this purpose ; able to answer all the subtle temptations by which our enemy endeavours to divert us from our straightforward path ; and convinced that whatever difficulties lie in the way, whether the loss of reputation, or of friends, or of wealth, or of life itself, our God who hath called us to serve Him, will uphold us ; that though in the conflict our flesh and our heart faileth, God will be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

SERMON XI.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

1854.

MATT. iv. 7.

“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

THE first device of the tempter had now been foiled. It was plain that our Lord could not be induced to distrust his heavenly Father's care, nor to use his supernatural powers for low and selfish purposes. But the Scripture testimony by which his high resolve had been defended, was of the boldest kind. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Thus might Jesus seem to put himself out of the range of common means of subsistence, and the influences of ordinary life. Secondary endeavours for nourishment and defence might thus be deemed to be set aside, and the supreme power of God invoked to supersede their office.

Thus at least was the determination of our Lord read by the tempter. It is ever the devil's policy, to represent confidence as being next door to presumption. For by this device he prevents the humble from being confident in God, by representing to them that if they are, they must needs lose their watchfulness, and their due reverence for Him, and become *over*-confident. The same plan of attack he followed with our Lord. "Dost thou trust in thy heavenly Father? Art thou willing to leave thy life without sustenance, because His word can sustain thee? Let me then put the principle to another test." Power was given him over the body of our Redeemer. He was allowed to bear Him to the holy city, Jerusalem; and there to place Him on the cornice of Herod's temple, which overlooked at a dizzy height the rocky ravine of the Kedron. "If thou be the Son of God," he taunts Him, "cast thyself down. Thy Father who can feed thee without bread, can also save thee without any human means. Thus will His power and will to preserve thee be put to the noblest trial. Thou hast cited the word of God. That word justifies my proposal. Thou hast made the Lord, even the Most High, thy habitation—hast cast thyself on Him to uphold thee. Of such persons it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against

■ stone." Nothing can be more apt than this citation. Was ever text more cunningly, more exactly applied? The very danger seems alluded to; the very preservation required, is described. But our Lord does not stay to discuss this matter. He prefers at once to strike home to the mind of the tempter the fallacy of his argument, by overruling the error with God's own statement of a general law of His spiritual kingdom. Two things are to be noticed in His reply. Satan has quoted the Scripture; but Jesus does not therefore forbear to quote it still. There are many, who from the abuse of a thing, would infer the inexpediency of its use. And thus they frequently suffer some of the best things in the world to become useless or to be set aside, merely because they have been abused for bad purposes. I would not enlarge upon this now; it might well furnish the subject of ■ separate discourse. I would only remind you how Satan has contrived to terrify many conscientious Christians out of the use of general social intercourse, and of many of those powers which God has bestowed on them for His glory in their exercise, because ungodly persons have made a wrong use of these things for worldly ends. But again, it is to be noticed that our Lord does not quote Scripture against Scripture. He appeals not from one Scripture to another, but from Scripture misunderstood to Scripture rightly understood;

from the particular case wrongly put, to the general command which prevents any such perversion. The promise of the ninety-first Psalm was spoken of him who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty ;—of one, that is, found in His ways, and walking according to His will. It can have no reference to a person rashly challenging the divine power to protect him in danger voluntarily incurred. That this is so, is proved by the positive command, applicable to this and to all cases in the life of God's servants, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Again on this second occasion, the Lord's weapon is taken from the same place in the divine armoury. The words were spoken to Israel in the wilderness by Moses. He is recounting God's mercies and their unworthiness. And he adds a particular example: "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye did in Massah." This reference takes us back to the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, where we find the people murmuring against Moses and against God, because there was no water for them to drink. And when, by God's command, water had been miraculously fetched for them from the rock, we read, "And he called the name of the place Massah (*i. e.* temptation) and Meribah (*i. e.* chiding), because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord

among us, or not?" Their sin was, that of putting God to the trial, instead of walking in His path, and trusting Him. It was not exactly that to which the tempter would have persuaded our Saviour; but it came under the same class, and was prohibited by the same law. Both would be, testing the presence and power of God by idle presumption. As long as man is in God's ways, he is sure of His protection. On the one hand, he needs no miracle for his supply; but on the other hand, he is not to be devising means of putting that protection to the proof. For that is taking himself out of God's ways, and forfeiting His guardianship at once. From that cornice of the temple, there was an ordinary way of descent; or if not, and our Lord were placed there in conformity with the divine purposes, a way of escape would, in the course of those purposes, be provided. The very last thing to be done, would be that which the tempter here suggested, to cast himself down, in dependence on supernatural assistance. But here again we have the characteristic subtlety of the serpent. It was for this very end that the Lord Jesus came, to triumph over danger and death, to set the steps of His people safe, to bring them into a state wherein no perils should make them afraid, or separate them from the Father's protection and His own love. Witness the boast of the great Apostle: "Who shall separate us from the

love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord¹." So that out of the very material of one of the choicest blessings of Christ's kingdom, does the subtle enemy weave his web of temptation, by which the Author of that kingdom is Himself to be entangled. But again his attempt is signally defeated; his fallacy is detected in its central point, and the spiritual kingdom of Christ, with all its conditions of humble obedience and unwavering trust, and all its promises of entire protection and setting above fear, is vindicated.

Let us now endeavour, by God's blessing, to apply this portion of our Lord's Temptation to our own instruction. In this, as in the last particular, His situation is ours. Placed here to do God's work, we are assured, while in that work, of His gracious protection. No danger can assail the servant of God, of which he need be afraid. His bodily frame is in the gracious

¹ Rom. viii. 35—39.

charge of his heavenly Father. Health and sickness, strength and weakness, a long or a short course in this present life, all these are portioned out by Him who hath appointed to each man, as well as to each race, the bounds of his habitation, and in whose hands are the times of us all. If any mischief befall him, in the world's sense of the word, he knows that it is no real mischief, but the ordinance of Him who overrules evil for good. The terror by night, and the arrow that flieth by day,—the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon, these are all under the command of Him who saith to one, Go, and he goeth, to another, Come, and he cometh, and to every one of His servants, Do this, and he doeth it. So that the godly man may pass the time of his sojourning here, in this sense, without fear, conscious of the enduring and effectual protection of Him whom he serves, in whom he lives and moves and has his being.

Nor is this security confined to things of the present world, or to the safety of the body from real harm. If "the very flesh of the faithful man" is a care to God, much more his spirit,—that for which and by which his flesh lives, and from which it derives its aim and its dignity. Let the servant of God be found in His ways, and his ultimate safety is assured. No powers of earth or hell shall ever be able to pluck him out of his Father's hand. All temptations, all

terrors, shall prove in vain; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. If he is strong, he shall be a champion of God's truth and cause on earth; if he is weak, God's strength shall be made perfect in his weakness. Thus amidst difficulties and doubts and dangers, shall he be upheld in entire security; amidst fightings without and fears within, kept in perfect peace. The Lord is his Shepherd; he shall not want. Though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death he need not fear, for God is with him; His rod and His staff, they comfort him. And in that awful day, when all shall be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, and every one shall give account of himself before God, he has One who will answer for him, and shall stand unabashed before the judgment-throne. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? If God be for us, who can be against us²?"

So complete is the safety of God's servants, in this world and in the next; a safety not matter of idle fancy and unsubstantial enthusiasm, but of truth and soberness; felt and tested by thousands of Christians day by day.

But as in our Master's case, so in ours, it is even on this safety that the Tempter founds his attack. His aim ever is, to turn the Christian's

² Rom. viii. 31. 33, 34.

security into a carnal security; to deprive it of its right character,—a holding on by faith to the everlasting strength of God,—and turn it into presumption; into a dependence on God's protection without His warrant; to persuade us to cast ourselves into danger, relying on that help, which, out of God's course, we have no reason to expect.

But, it may be said, is the matter really as you are describing it? Is it a fault among Christians to take too much for granted the divine protection and their own safety? Nay, is it not rather our besetting fault to *distrust* God,—to imagine ourselves always unsafe, and to disbelieve, rather than assume His promises? Do we not find, for one Christian who is tempted to presumption, many who are feeble-minded and hesitating? If unwarranted assurance can number its victims by hundreds, may not unbelief register its hundreds of thousands?

I fully acknowledge the justice of these questions, and it is even from them that I would illustrate and set before you our danger. The facts rightly implied in them, furnish me with just the most pointed instances of the tempter's subtlety in this matter. Look at it in this light. God has declared: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved³;" "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus⁴." But these hundreds of thou-

³ Acts xvi. 31.

⁴ Rom. iii. 1.

sands say, "I will be saved without believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. I have that confidence in the mercy and the loving-kindness of my Creator and preserver, that I do not fear to meet Him without that faith in His Son which He has declared to be essential to salvation." Why, what is this, but tempting the Lord your God? You stand on the pinnacle of life, and you gaze down into the gulf which is fixed between you and eternity. God has provided a way whereby that gulf may be safely entered and passed. You will have none of that His way. No—trusting to some vague phantom of security, you will cast yourself down. Men may call this humility; is it not rather presumption, and that of no common order? To set aside the ordinance of the God of Redemption and say "I will be saved in my own way;" is it not rather an instance of the success of Satan's scheme, when he has persuaded you thus to take your leap into the vast void, trusting to I know not what vague notions of God's mercy and loving-kindness, with the corruption of sin in you, and God's own remedy for it untried and despised?

And then again, take the wavering, half-persuaded Christian. The cross of Christ is before him; there was completed the satisfaction for the sin of the world; there, once for all, was sin put away by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. There his sins were blotted out; and to

enter into that blessed removal of guilt, that peace and joy in the non-imputation of sin, his *faith* alone is required. But that faith he gives not. He withholds the only step which would place him within God's fold, and bless him with the joy which belongs to His chosen people. He stands at the door, but does not knock; he knows the remedy which God has provided for sin,—he beholds it,—he praises it,—but he does not apply it. This again is often called humility;—to hold back from a thorough reception of Christ's finished work, and call ourselves unworthy of it, and not presume to count ourselves among those for whom it was wrought, and take shelter under many such convenient phrases, and all just to save the trouble of abasing self and exalting God—all that we may wear the fair name of a Christian without fighting the fight of faith. Is not this tempting the Lord our God—to sport with His gift of redemption—to admit Christ every where but into our hearts and hopes, and suppose that we shall be saved by Him, without any personal reception of Him?

Thus these false humilities which were supposed to be the opposites of presumption, on being examined prove to be very nearly allied to it, and to fall under the heads of tempting God.

But let us now come for a moment to those temptations of the Christian which more di-

rectly correspond to that of our Lord. Do Christians never thrust themselves into spiritual danger, presuming on the divine help? What are, for example, all their very near approaches to sin, as they suppose with a safe conscience? What their tacit agreement to shut their eyes to this or that fault in themselves or others, and retain their strictness of profession, while all the time that profession is openly and notoriously contradicted in their conduct? What is it but tempting God, to be bound under a vow to renounce the world and the flesh, and then to lead a life of entire dedication to the world, and indulgence of the flesh? What is it but tempting God, to profess to believe in a Saviour who declares that none can be His disciple who does not deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Him, the man of sorrows,—and yet to be utterly scorning the duty of self-denial, taking all pains that life may be without its cross, and as unlike as possible to the life of Christ?

Then again: God has declared that the Christian's life is a conflict—that our spiritual enemies are many and strong; He has described to us our foe as a roaring lion going about, seeking whom he may devour; as a keen and subtle spirit, eagerly bent on our destruction, far too powerful for us, unless we be clad in the armour of God, unless we have on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the

hope of salvation, and are able to wield with effect the sword of the Spirit. So close is the combat, so arduous the victory, that we are told the righteous are scarcely saved ;—that it is represented to us as a special blessing, to endure to the end and overcome. What then but tempting God is it, to rush into this fray without one of the arms which are so needful to wage it successfully ; to go to meet the powerful foe, not in the divine strength, but with no preparation, no armour, no knowledge of ourselves or the enemy ? And yet what is more common, than to meet with persons who ought to be armed at all points, but are really armed at none, casting themselves into the midst of danger, secure apparently of victory, but in reality sure to be overcome ? What sight is commoner, than the Christian of much profession, thoroughly worldly in spirit, an example of many good words, but of little that is really good in holy life ? And what is the whole course of such an one, but a tempting of God,—a challenging of Him to prove His Gospel true—a saying to Him, “ I disregard Thy threats, I value not Thy promises ; self and the world are my realities : Thy glory and my soul’s good and a happy eternity were convenient things to talk about, not heartfelt and living truths ? ” Is not this temptation of God, in one of its most daring forms ?

And let us think how many dangers we have

to face in life, how many severe tests of our faith, how many unexpected trials at every turn; yea how many calls from God to know Him more, to love Him more, to serve Him better? What is it then but tempting Him, to be going carelessly on as if life were nothing but a spending of so much time, as if hours and days and years were not speeding away to their account with all their mercies and opportunities and judgments recorded against us, if not for us? He who walks not circumspectly, is tempting God—casting himself on the ocean of life without chart or compass, and looking to Him who has provided both for his use, to bring him safe to heaven without them.

And if we look on to the end of life,—to the solemn hour in which we must every one pass from time into eternity,—how many of us are tempting God in the prospect of death! How many are there—I am now speaking to those who are something more than mere nominal Christians—who have never honestly faced the duty of preparation for death, but are leaving it to the chance of a sick-bed, on which they may never be laid, or which may find them powerless in mind and body for such a serious task.

To arm us for the conflict of the Christian life, to prepare us for the Christian's death, God has given us the means of grace. His ear is ever open to our prayers, His book lies

before us to search, His house invites us to public worship, His holy table is spread for us from time to time. To neglect any of these, is to tempt the Lord our God. That Christian tempts Him, who passes His days without genuine communing with Him in private prayer, and without consulting His word; that master of a household tempts God, whose family hears no daily call to social prayer, whose domestics are expected to serve their earthly master, but forbidden, or which is the same thing, never reminded, to serve their God. How can we expect private or family blessings, if these most obvious means of attaining them are neglected?

And I might add, and am bound to add, that Christian nation tempts God, which with such opportunities, and such wealth entrusted to her, as no other nation has ever had in the history of the world, neglects to make every provision in her power for God to be known and served by all her people; attempts to solve the great social problem which to the end will perplex the peoples of the earth, without that golden clue which God Himself has furnished,—that righteousness, which exalteth a nation.

And as especially belonging, as a practical duty, to this present time, let me remind you that those tempt God, who when His judgments are abroad in the earth, and expected among ourselves, neglect any human means in

their power of averting them ; that all indolence, all leaving things to mere chance, at such a time, is in fact presumption, and disregard of the warnings of His providence.

I beseech you, think on these things ;—and when the enemy of your souls in all these various ways persuades you to cast yourselves unarmed and unprepared on danger, against which God's providence or grace has enabled you both to arm and prepare, remember how our great Captain fought and conquered ; abide, as He did, in the ways and under the protection of your heavenly Father ; and oppose to every such solicitation, the command, written not only on the page of Scripture, but in the tablets of your hearts, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

SERMON XII.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

1854.

MATT. iv. 10.

“Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

IT was by this time evident, that our blessed Lord was not to be tempted to either distrust or presumption. He had taken his stand on the path which his heavenly Father had marked out for him ; and from that track, to the left or the right, He would not deviate. But what if He were once more tried, with a temptation which should coincide with the direction of that path itself? How if He could be induced, in the fulfilment of His mission on earth, to take a shorter and less toilsome way than that on which he appeared to be entering? He came into the world to be a King. The angelic announcement to his virgin mother had promised that He should reign over the house of Jacob for

ever, and that of His kingdom there should be no end. The magi from the East had been led by his star to Jerusalem, and asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Old prophecies had celebrated the splendour, the extent, the duration of his empire. "All nations were to fall down before Him,—all kings were to do Him service." The longing of the Jewish people had for ages been towards their King Messiah; and of late the echoes of the wilderness had been awakened to the voice which cried, "The kingdom of God is at hand."

Desperation made the tempter bold. His attack is no longer partial—no longer to overthrow confidence or to corrupt humility; in this last attempt he ventures all; he dares to aim at winning the Prince of the kingdom of light to be a vassal of the kingdom of darkness. So truly was he the father of those who afterwards insinuated that He cast out evil spirits by Beelzebub, that he solicits Him here to the same act—to subject the devils by the Prince of the devils. He took Him up into an exceeding high mountain; using, as is not uncommonly the case in supernatural acts, ordinary means, as the basis of a miraculous result. From that height he shews Him in vision all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. It is a noble sight, when we behold from some eminence in a fair country a wide stretch of territory, cheered with the abodes of men,

and busy with their industry. It is nobler still, when we read in the pages of the masters of history, of the gathered resources and majesty of some mighty empire, its provinces, its legions, its navies, its colonies, the traffic of its ports, and the splendour of its metropolis. It is perhaps noblest of all, when we contemplate as a whole the vast results of some great power bestowed on humanity: the continents which rose to view at the discovery of the compass, the great sunrise of knowledge which followed the invention of printing, the yet unnumbered social changes which the application of science in our own days is bringing about. But what is each, or what are all of these, compared to the vision displayed from the Mount of Temptation; to "all the kingdoms of the world, and all their glory?" What heart would not leap at the sight? Can we suppose that even our Lord himself beheld it unmoved? That He, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice,—who delights in order and seemly rule,—who loved men when they were His enemies, and was bringing them by the discipline of all these forms of earthly subjection to receive His Gospel,—would feel no gush of sympathy, no accession of the stirrings of divine love, at the sight of the gathered sons of men, abiding under their chiefs in their tents, and waiting for the advent of their Lord? He had appointed to each of these nations its times and the bounds

of its habitation. They were His by creation, —His again by purchase, by right of that covenant, struck and ratified before the foundation of the world, and which He had come into the world to fulfil. He knew them, He loved them all; from the stately Cæsar on his Palatine hill, to the swarthy African born to his heritage of toil; yea, to the degraded savage in islands and continents yet unnamed by man; from the king of kings to the servant of servants, every heart was in His hand, every power was His gift. Here was his own, his cherished inheritance. These kingdoms were all to become His, and He was to reign over them for ever and ever. But how much lay between him, as He then stood on that mount, and their possession! Through what cruel mockings and insults must He pass, ere he reach it! Between Him and his kingdom lay the conflict, the betrayal, the agony, the scourge, the cross, the grave. Nor was this all. Long centuries must the leaven of his Gospel work, ere these kingdoms were His. The joy set before him, though fixed in the eternal purposes of God, was yet as a bright light at an infinite distance, with a stormy ocean between. Could not, we may perhaps think, the bitter cup of suffering pass away from him? Could not a way be devised, by which He, the long-expected King, might come and take his power? Might not the array of His Bride be hastened, and the

desire of all nations accomplished? O brethren, if we think thus, we know but little of man's unworthiness, or of Christ's love. He came not to win a throne of pomp and circumstance, founded on human homage, but He came to win men's hearts, and those hearts loved Him not. The law of His kingdom was not to be the Roman law of seeming justice, nor the savage law of brute force, but the law of love,—of that despised and slowly winning power, which in spite of His own glorious example, has been now these eighteen centuries, and has never softened even the outer crust of man's selfishness. And the adornment of His kingdom was not to be in gilded domes and streets of palaces, nor in glittering arms and rich caparisons; but the King's daughter, His lovely Bride, is to be all glorious within: adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which His church, after all these ages, has hardly begun to put on. There was for Him no short way, no easy path, to His glory; every delay, every disappointment, every adverse element, was necessary, was predetermined, was weighed in the balance and found lighter than vanity against His redeeming love. Every taunt of every Pharisee, every stroke of the scourge, every thorn on his brow, every moment of darkness and destitution on the cross, had been before Him for ages of ages; and they were all fused into his mighty resolve to save the

body, soul, and spirit of man. Not by one day can the revelation of His kingdom be anticipated. When the last sinner is converted, the last prayer offered before the throne, the last tear fallen or wiped away, the last wandering sheep sought and found, and the number of His elect is accomplished,—then shall His kingdom come, but not till then. All the restlessness of His impatient disciples, all the scorn of the unbelieving world, all the malice of the adversary, can never separate what God has united—the cross and the crown, the conflict and the triumph, the enduring to the end and being saved. So unlikely was it that our Lord would grasp at the hasty possession of His kingdom, or forego aught of that which He came on earth to do and to suffer.

But if that which was attempted was unlikely to succeed, surely the method in which it was attempted rendered certain the improbability. The world, in so far as it is in rebellion against God, is drawn into the power of God's enemy. And thus the devil is known in Scripture as "the Prince of this world." The ungodly world is said to "lie in the wicked one," and ungodly men to be "led captive by him at his will." Let it however be remembered, that this title is only a true one in so far as the world is characterized and absorbed by that rebellion. It is not true in the abstract. The world is not, and never was, the devil's world, but God's

world. And it is not the devil who putteth down one, and setteth up another, but God. The world might have become the devil's world when man became his slave; but it did not: for Christ, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, interposed His precious blood, which in due time was to be shed for man, and the world became again man's, by Christ's covenanted work in man's nature, and by becoming Christ's rightful purchase. When therefore Satan promised, "All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them," and asserted, "For that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it," he only acted consistently with his usual and too often successful policy, whose maxim is,—the bolder the lie, the greater the chance of its being taken for the truth; and shewed that which the history of the world abundantly testifies, that none are so much or so deeply deceived, as deceivers themselves. "To whomsoever I will, I give it." But he forgot, that some of his most favoured and highly promoted servants had been, after all, only instruments in God's hand for His purposes; he knew not, that when he thought he had given the throne of the world to the madman Alexander, God was carrying by his means into the furthest East the language in which the revelation of His Son was to be made to man; he little suspected that when, as at this time, the sensual tyrant

who ruled the Roman empire seemed to be a mere tool of his, God by that very empire was hushing the nations into tranquillity, that they might hear the preachers of His Gospel.

And strange as are the promise and the assertion, still stranger is the condition annexed: "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Here spoke the true character of him who fell through pride, and through exalting himself against the Most High. Clearly as his former wiles had been seen through by our Saviour's eye, they had at least been masked under a veil of piety and decency. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread:" here was an apparent seemliness, that the common wants of the body should not be allowed to afflict One whose power could at once supply them. "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:" here was a seeming propriety, that One whom the angels served, should be their special care, and that the Father would keep from His Christ all harm. And in consequence, our Lord, in his infinite wisdom, answered those two other temptations according to their professed tenour, and condescended to deal with their import, and refute the fallacies which they were built upon. But now the mask is thrown off. Satan stands forth impiously exulting in his name as God's adversary, and vaunting his rebellion against Him.

No longer therefore does Jesus answer the fool according to his folly, or condescend to deal with his offer or his assertions, but meets him with "Get thee hence, Satan." Yet not relinquishing even now the sword of the Spirit, He adds for our profit, and to complete his testimony to his own position as the Son of man, placed under obedience to the Father, "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." This great command lay at the very root of God's law, as given to His people the Jews. He who broke this, broke all. And it was by departure from this, that the children of Israel had ever drawn down on themselves God's wrath. As therefore the tempter's last attack had been thorough and decisive, on our Lord's whole position as the Son and servant of God,—so is this His reply thorough and decisive: "The Lord is my God, and I will serve no other."

And now, beloved, let us pass as usual from our Redeemer's example to ourselves, and endeavour to draw from what has been said, lessons for our daily lives. It may seem as if in this case there were not much similarity between Him and us. But His example does not perhaps lie so far off as we might at first sight suppose. There are many blessings, many advantages even of a temporal kind, within our reach, and forming legitimate objects of our desire. The multiplication of the various

accessories to life, and life's usefulness, and the putting forth of life's energies,—the enlargement of our sphere of activity, the succour and advancement of those whom we love, and who sympathize and have the same aim with ourselves,—these and other similar things are well worth our desire to attain them, and for these every man more or less exerts himself. But such things are often offered to us from objectionable quarters, and on objectionable conditions. “All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me,” is said often in the course of our lives, to each one among us. And with the invitation, the fallacy too is offered: “for they are mine, and to whomsoever I will, I give them.” We see the ungodly prosper; we cannot but feel that strict adherence to godly principle is a certain hindrance to a man in his influence, in his advancement, in his outward standing before the world; and we believe the fallacy: we come to think that influence, advancement, outward standing, are the devil's gifts, or at best but chance-medley, in which the bold and reckless have at all events the foremost turn. And thus multitudes among us are misled, and fall down and worship the tempter to attain these their objects. Few years pass over the mercantile, few over the political world, which do not witness the detection and downfall of some, who have sought legitimate ends by the unwor-

thiest of means, all the time perhaps keeping up the profession and semblance of religious principle, while they had practically sold themselves to Satan, and become his worshippers. In all such cases, the Christian's duty is plain. First, he must never be so carried away with the pursuit of this world's advantages, as that his better reason should be overcome, but he must be watchful, and temperate in all his desires, knowing that this is not his rest, but that he looks for another country, even a heavenly. This being secured, he must, in the temperate and lawful pursuit of worldly advantage, take heed that he receive nothing on conditions which touch his allegiance to his heavenly Father. As long as the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, so long the greater part of this world's matters will be subjected to their rule, and apparently at their disposal; and we must receive from them many things in the common intercourse of life. But let us take heed, that we receive them not fettered with unworthy conditions; that we remain free to serve the Lord our God, and to rule our lives by His law.

And let it not for a moment be supposed, that the case I am putting is imaginary merely. How often does Satan persuade us by his subtleties to possess ourselves of some advantage in an unchristian and degrading manner. Take

for instance the great work of the Christian church; to persuade men's minds, to make them one in heart by converting them to Christ. A noble work, and to be wrought out through the disappointments, and toils, and tears, of ages. But the tempter, who has ever been more successful with the church than he was with her Head, has suggested, that it was much easier to produce uniformity than unity,—to coerce men's bodies, than to persuade their minds;—and in consequence, the majority of Christian churches, forsaking the long and toilsome way to their end, have attempted the other; and have too truly fallen down and worshipped Satan in its accomplishment. When they ought to have sent out missions, and prayed, and persuaded, and exhibited examples of Christian love, they have published anathemas, and striven to propagate God's truth by the sword, and the stake, and the censorship. And the consequence is, that in very many of those things in which we ought for the time to be masters, we have yet to learn; that we have hindered, instead of furthering, the unity at which we aimed; and now, eighteen centuries after the Lord has left us, we have the first principles of Christian liberty and love to begin again.

Take yet another public example, on which we all may not perhaps be agreed, but of the pertinence of which I am myself persuaded.

Owing to our very general neglect of Christian education in the past age and in this, habits of excess have become fearfully prevalent in the lower orders of society. There are two ways of meeting this evil. One is, to retrace our steps, and through toil, and disappointment, and perhaps long apparent want of success, raise the moral standard of our people; each one exerting all his private influence, and joining in aiding the public influence, to promote true habits of temperance, and teaching men to use God's gifts without abusing them. This aim, to restore to our fellow-men their own self-government, by inspiring them with true principle and the fear of God, is beyond all doubt the right one, and the only safe one in the end. But the tempter points out a shorter and easier way. To get the work apparently, and not thoroughly done, is his object; to make great shew by numbers reclaimed, and so to satisfy religious men that all is in a fair way of being accomplished,—and lull them into security, while his mischief goes on. If great multitudes can but be prevailed on to pledge themselves to total abstinence, the end is apparently gained in less time, and with less trouble. It is said, you cannot depend on any man temperately to use without abuse, and therefore at once the vow of abstinence must be taken, as your only safe guarantee. I answer, then are you, by your own confession degrading those

men from the position of responsible beings in the matter,—teaching them to sink their daily accountableness to God for the use of His gifts, in an irrational and unscriptural abjuration of those gifts ;—and so far hindering their upward progress to the light of that Christian freedom, in which they shall be taught of God's Spirit not to use their liberty for a cloke of licentiousness.

How often again are our religious and charitable societies led into this snare, to attempt to compass their good ends by the most unworthy means ! How often, nay how constantly is their cry among us for money, money at all hazards and from all sources—as if money, and not God, were the friend of the needy, and the healer of the sick, and the converter of the heathen, and all in all.

But to return to by far the most important portion of the subject to us here present, how many turnings are there of our lives, when a substantial advantage, which by the true and honest road of Christian principle would lie far off, with much conflict and toil between, is brought near and offered to us in immediate possession if we will but forswear our allegiance to Christ, and pass over to the enemy's camp and take Satan for our captain. O brethren, let no magic vision raised by our tempter ever induce us to forsake the narrow way, though winding perhaps and far about, for such shorter

and easier paths. In all such cases let us remember Christ, with the world and its glory offered him. He who came to be the world's King, thrust from him the Tempter with indignation, rather than entertain the thought of forgetting His allegiance to His heavenly Father. And we, who come here simply to glorify Him by whatever state He has chosen for us, by wealth or poverty, by doing or suffering,—what does it import to us if we forfeit the world's advantages or the world's opinion, or fail of acquiring more influence, more possession, more indulgences? But it does matter to us beyond every thing else on earth, that we be found faithful to Him who hath called us,—worshipping and serving Him only.

And let me not conclude without remembering that I am speaking to several, who before we meet here next Sunday will have taken on them the service of God in an especial and solemn manner. To those who are about to be confirmed, I would say, This subject is to you one of the deepest interest. You, like your Saviour, will be tempted, and that ere long, to cast aside the toilsome Christian life which you have taken upon you, and adopt the soft and easy ways of the world. "Come with us," they will say to you, "and we will give you all you desire. You want peace—behold us; we are never troubled in conscience, nor disquieted with visionary fears; you want joy—come with

us and join the giddy throng of the seekers of pleasure, and you shall have it. All these things shall be yours, if you will consent to cast aside your prayers and serious thoughts, and become votaries of this world's fashion." O my young friends, may you have the wisdom and the courage to repel with indignation all such false and cowardly attempts to make you traitors to your God;—wisdom to see that there is no true peace but peace with Him,—the peace of the conscience sprinkled with Christ's blood by faith,—the peace which passeth understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away;—that there is no true joy but joy in Him who is your Saviour, your Master, your Captain, and your God, in whose finished work you stand complete, and in whom, having not seen Him, you may yet rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;—and courage, that you may scorn ever to do God's work in any but God's way; that you may never allow the wiles of worldly shrewdness, nor the glitter of worldly pomp, nor the persuasion of this world's affection, nor any thing within or without, to divert you from the path which, by His blessing on you, you are now led to choose.

May your resolve, and the resolve of every one who hears me, when the world and Satan tempt us, be that of Joshua of old, "As for you, serve ye whom ye please; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And

in this resolve, fed by continual prayer and the supplies of the Holy Spirit, may we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, worshipping and serving Him only, as He hath commanded us, and ever striving onward, as did our Saviour before us, through the longer and safer path of toil and conflict, to His heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XIII.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

1854.

MATT. iv. 11.

“Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”

THE final repulse of the Tempter was accompanied by a command, “Get thee hence, Satan.” And we may well conceive that this command was to the enemy a word of power, which he might not disobey. He who henceforth cast out the evil spirits with a word, here proved His authority on their chief. In St. Luke’s Gospel, we are told that the devil had ended all the temptation. All his devices were exhausted. He had selected them with consummate judgment, and applied them with remarkable skill. From the ordinary materials for his temptations, he was here excluded. The grosser and more commonly successful inlets for his pernicious influence over us, were never so

much as tried in the case of our Saviour. The tempter was aware, that He had nothing in Him; that it was not as prone to sin that He was to be tempted, but as having brought an infirm and subordinate nature into union with Deity, and thus open to the danger of foregoing the conditions on which His subjection as man to the Father was carried on. It is obvious that this would have been done, either by distrust, or presumption. To bring about these, his two first attacks were directed. Both having signally failed, he had recourse, as we saw last Sunday, to that third and boldest stroke, by which he wished to rouse the ambition of Him who was born into the world to be a King, and gain Him for one of his own servants and worshippers. Equally, or rather more signally, did this his last attempt fail of success. This being so, he departs from our Lord. But we should notice the significant addition in St. Luke: "When the devil had ended all his temptation, he departed from Him *for a season*." Never, as far as we are told, did he meet Him in personal conflict again. But in the gathering malice of His enemies, in the dark treachery of one of His chosen Apostles, in the final struggle which introduced His passion, we recognize, even when we are not expressly informed of them, the workings of the ever watchful and subtle foe; all contributing to bruise, it is true, the heel of

the seed of the woman, but in the end to crush for ever the head of the serpent himself.

And now let us contemplate our blessed Lord after the tempter departed from him. Before he had come to Him, we read that He was an hungered. We may well then conceive of him at the end of the Temptation, as feeble and exhausted in the extreme. He was not exempt, any more than ourselves, from the effect on a frame already weak, of the strong resolves and energizing of the spirit. The result of what had past was to Him in the wilderness, in its degree, what the weight of the future was in the garden of Gethsemane: this however being remembered, that in our Lord's life, as His glory was more and more manifested, so did His sufferings increase in intensity and awfulness. If the parallel between this first hour and power of darkness, and the last, does not altogether hold good, in one respect at least it is remarkable. In both cases, the same assistance was sent to Him. "Behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." The stones of the wilderness are after all made bread for Him; the angels are by His Father given charge concerning Him and bear Him in their hands; and the subject hosts of heaven serve Him, whom the glory of the kingdoms of the earth could not divert to ambition. How frequent, and how full of interest, is this ministry of angels in the course of our Redeemer on

earth. By an angel, who is specially named in Scripture, was the birth of His great fore-runner announced, and in due time His own. By one, and afterwards by a multitude of the heavenly host, was the glad event celebrated, and the gracious purpose of God in Redemption made known to men. In his temptation, His wants are supplied by angels; in His agony, an angel from heaven appeared to Him strengthening Him. When His sacred Body had burst the bands of the tomb, it was the special office of one and another of these glorious beings to declare to His bewildered and incredulous followers, that He was not there, but risen. And in that last solemn moment, when the parting track of His ascending glory was fading from the eyes of the men of Galilee as they gazed upwards, it is from the two men who stood by in white apparel, that the Church heard the promise on which she sustains her widowhood, "This same Jesus who is taken from you into heaven, shall so return in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." It seems to me that we neglect too much, as a subject of delightful and edifying contemplation, the existence, and ministry of these angels of God. It was perhaps natural, that in the minds of us Protestants there should be a reaction from the blighting superstition of the Church of Rome, which has marred this as well as every other revelation of the Gospel, by becoming wise

above that which is written, and intruding into things which man has not seen, and making the saints and angels of God, who are our fellow-servants, and of those who worship Him, into the heroes and demi-gods of a mythology which is pagan in all but its names. But at the same time we must remember, that we are bound to be wise up to that which is written, and that God has revealed nothing in vain. We can hardly suppose that our Lord would, in the short and solemn form of prayer which He has given us, have taught us to say "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," if He had intended us to forget altogether that innumerable company of angels who rejoice to do His will, and whom He thus proposes as our pattern. We can hardly imagine, that when He assigns as a reason why we are to take heed that we offend not one of His little ones,—"for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven," He was speaking at random, or saying dangerous words, which we were to shrink from explaining and applying. Again, when in one of His most affecting parables He reveals to us, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, can any deny that He presents to us that joy as a subject for us to contemplate, a reason to persuade us to become the occasion of it? Notice too, how constantly, when He speaks of His coming again, He joins

with the mention of His Father's glory and His own, that of His holy angels,—and even declares to us “Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” His Apostle also, when dwelling on a point of seemliness in the assemblies of Christians, alleges the presence of the angels, as a reason why all things should be done decently and in order¹. It is to me very plain, that such sayings as these, which I might multiply many-fold, cannot be disregarded by those who take their religion from the word of God, without detriment to their spiritual life. If God's Spirit has seen fit to reveal to us so much of the nature and feelings and employments of the inhabitants of the unseen world,—and that in connexion with our own wants and duties,—it is that we may profit by that His revelation, and not that we may cast it aside unheeded. I know that this is a subject which it is not now the custom to dwell on. Strange to say,—that party among us, who are the most earnest upholders of God's truth, and to whom we owe a boundless debt of gratitude for their watchfulness against the aggressions of its insidious enemy, would have us disregard the Scripture doctrine of the ministry of angels, and if possible forget their existence altogether. In this they have certainly been wrong,—not only in departing from

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 10.

God's word, but in neglecting a truth which might have co-operated most usefully with others which they are the first to acknowledge, in counteracting the materialistic tendencies of our age. We in this day are for the most part emancipated from gross superstitions; and let us be ever thankful for it. But hence springs a temptation, to forget the existence and presence of the spiritual world; to become wholly unspiritual, and regard matter as the only existence, and each man as shut up in his body, alone in the universe. And then naturally follows a low apprehension of facts that are purely spiritual, and a mean conception of even God Himself, and of the spirit of man, and of its real life, and its high destiny. And so even the religious man becomes imperfect, leading an isolated and imprisoned life, with no cloud of witnesses present to him and urging him to his race, no perfect order of heaven-begetting yearnings for like perfect order on earth,—nay with his own dear ones who are fallen asleep in Jesus unnaturally and unnecessarily severed from his daily thoughts and his daily path,—and with his apprehension of the glory to come made ineffectual and obscure. In such matters, dear brethren, may we ever be able to rise above the mere religious fashion of the day, and the fears and prejudices of party, and go direct to the source of every Christian's faith,—the word of God itself. If we receive what it gives us, and

meditate on what it reveals, we cannot go wrong. Its great central truths—the redemption of man by Christ alone, and his renewal by the Holy Spirit, will not be hindered but carried forward in their operation by our feeling, that into the wonders of this redemption the angels desire to look—and remembering our high office, that even unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is to be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

But to return. Angels came and ministered to Him. Thus ever were the times of His lowest humiliation set off and illustrated by glory. He lay a newborn babe in the manger at Bethlehem; but the heavens were lit up with brightness, and the hosts of God sung over Him their chorus of praise. He sunk exhausted under the shrubs of the wilderness, but His angels ministered to Him. He died the death of a slave, a spectacle of shame to mocking multitudes; and the sun veiled his face, and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, and the dead arose. Testimony is never wanting that He is the Son of God—though made lower than the angels, yet their King; though subjected to the laws of nature, yet nature's Lord; dying for man,—but when He dies, the light of the world is darkened.

And now His present conflict is over. He stands victorious, while the tempter has fallen.

He, the second Adam, has brought in and secured righteousness for us. It remains only, that He accomplish the course of his ministry in which He was to manifest himself as the Son of God, and by the rejection of his own be brought to that death which was to be the life of the world. On this latter subject, please God, much will be said during the course of next week. We have now been spared to accompany Him through the various scenes of his eventful Temptation; and in concluding that subject, let us endeavour, without entering again into each particular, to gather up the general instruction to be gained from it.

First He has, by His example under temptation, taught us HOW TO RESIST IT. Our weakness is, when any unlawful course is proposed to us, to be on the search ever for separate excuses to shield us in each case. We shrink from applying general principles which may cover every attack; we are ashamed too often to stand at once in God's ways and refer to His will. Here we have an eminent example in our blessed Lord. He did not enter into the separate circumstances of each form of temptation, but applied to them all, as His means of resistance, his position as the servant of God, subject to His law, and from it taking the maxims of His conduct. O that Christians would learn to be like Him in this! How many have we amongst us, who are compro-

missing, timid disciples of Christ—who in their hearts love their Saviour, but with their lips often deny Him when they should have borne testimony to His name.

Next His example shews us the PROPER USE OF GOD'S WORD. When the Apostle is enumerating the portions of the Christian's armour, he mentions "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." But there is an unskilful, as well as an effectual use of this spiritual weapon. Nothing is more common in our days than a plentiful use of citations from Scripture, by persons who have little or no intelligent appreciation of their meaning or reference. Almost any thing may be proved from the Bible, used as I fear I must say the majority of religious persons among ourselves are in the habit of using it. Let our Lord's example on this occasion keep us from rash or random application of Scripture texts. With what precision is each brought forward by Him. How admirably does the context throw light on the use which He makes of each. The very position of those to whom the words were spoken is that in which He stands,—the Son and servant of God, obedient to His holy law. All will bear the most thorough searching into; and the deeper the search, the stronger does His defence become. And thus, brethren, must we deal with the Bible, if we wish it to suffice for our spiritual conflict. It may be very well for

those to play with texts, and uphold accommodated meanings, and far-sought allusions, who can afford time for such exhibition of their fancy or their skill; but we are soldiers in an enemy's country, warring in earnest; we must so fight, as not beating the air; we have no time to waste our strength. Let us then learn to use Scripture with real power and effect; never taking its words out of their place, but always enquiring by whom, and when, and to whom, they were spoken,—and abstaining from the temptation to apply them, however apt they may seem, unless in the fulness of that their meaning, in which alone they will be powerful, and in which they must ever be irresistible. And to this end, we must *study* the Bible. No mere easy deference to the general reverence for its contents—no mere well-meant but ignorant acceptance of it as a whole, will enable us to wield it against each separate device of our subtle enemy:—we must go down into its depths, and know them each one for himself; we must have delved into the caverns where its jewels lie, with labour which has cost us time and weariness. And we must study the Bible *devotionally*; not as a mere intellectual exercise, but to ascertain the mind of the Spirit of God,—a search which requires spiritual discernment,—the fruit of communion with Him in singleness of heart and a holy life.

But unquestionably the greatest lesson for

the disciple of Jesus to learn from the Temptation of his Master, is one of *encouragement*, tending to draw him closer to Christ, and to make Him more precious. "In that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." If we were called on to fight our way through our trials and temptations with the assurance that the mighty and invisible God, who made us and knows our weaknesses, would not leave us to be over-matched, but would stand on our side, such a thought, though doubtless full of comfort when apprehended, would lie, as it has ever been found to do, far above the reach of the weaker minds and feebler spirits of the vast majority of mankind. But when One is set before us as our ever-present Helper, who Himself has passed through the struggle,—when we know that we are not alone in the bitterness of our spirits,—that in the darkest place in our course we shall find His footsteps, what a different matter does each Christian's appointed conflict become—how full of sympathy, how full of promise, how full of Christ.

With such thoughts of Him, beloved, let us bring to a close our Lent meditations on the wonders, and the lessons, of His Temptation. "He hath suffered, being tempted." Are we tempted likewise,—each with his burden to bear,—each placed in conflict, hand to hand with our foe, who ever seems too strong for us,

knowing and pressing our weak points, cruel, unrelenting, insatiable to destroy us? Are we sensible of our imperfections of temper, of word, of act, and do we dread evermore lest these should be carried onward by him till they issue in our ruin? O who among my hearers is there that has not occasion thus to fear? Who knows himself, and does not tremble for himself? What serious-minded man can think calmly of his spiritual reckoning, even with all the assurances of his faith in Christ, and with all the testimony of the Spirit that he is a son of God? Who does not feel that each day's repentance needs to be repented of—each day's prayer wants forgiveness—each day's employment falls infinitely short of his lowest Christian standard?

Well then, let us look to Him, who has suffered in like manner. Our fears, our sorrowing over ourselves, our struggles with the foe, all have an answer in Him. We are His members—His spiritual Body. Let the meanest member suffer, the Head suffers with it. He who now tempts the weakest of Christ's disciples, tempts Him. The poor sinner, who strives after Christ in spite of self and Satan, strives in His strength. The little child, who curbs the rebellious temper for Jesus' sake, fights with His arm, who led captivity captive, and triumphed over death and hell. The soul that cleaves to the dust and pleads with God to be

quickened, pleads with the voice of that Spirit which brought up Jesus from the dead. Every servant of God who endures to the end and is saved, is one more jewel in the Redeemer's crown, one more note in the everlasting song of triumph—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

True, that our course is cast amidst many and sore temptations. All these that He withstood, and a thousand more which owe their strength to sin within us, try us day by day. We must not expect it to be otherwise. The servant must not be above his master, nor the disciple above his lord. Yet, beloved, let us not faint, but look to Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith. Let the course of His temptation mark out for us that of our own. Again and again will Satan come to us with his attractive fallacies, his misquoted scriptures, his short and easy ways to happiness. Against every one may we be watchful and ready,—standing to our weapons, and aiming no blow in vain. And thus, though the intensity of his enmity may increase, and our trials may not be lighter but heavier as life advances, may we find that our power and strength to resist also increases; till finally, when our time of temptation is over, and our trial in the furnace accomplished, we may be received by the heavenly ministers of His will into that rest which He has entered and is preparing for His people.

And you, my young friends, whom we have so lately enlisted afresh with your own free consent in the heavenly army, in commencing your course of active and mature service, be not disheartened, though trials and conflicts await you ; greater is He that is with you than he that is against you ; life is short and precious, and it is for you to rejoice that you are counted worthy to spend it in His service, and suffer for His name.

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.”

SERMON XIV.

SUNDAY BEFORE EASTER.

1854.

JOHN xii. 23.

“The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.”

AMONG the many tokens of the powerlessness of words to keep alive the ideas once conveyed by them, this is one,—that we are accustomed to such expressions as “glorying in the cross of Christ.” When first uttered, the words formed a startling paradox; and as such, the Apostle wrote them, to awaken and astonish his readers, and to set the boast of the Christian in the strongest possible contrast to the boast of the world. For a time, we may well imagine, those who read or heard St. Paul’s Epistles would be thus astonished with such an expression. But we first start at paradoxes, and then acquiesce in and slumber over them; and so it has been with this one. The *offence* of the cross, in its

first sense, has ceased. We all believe in One who was crucified. We all have received the fact and the symbol of His crucifixion. The hated and despised instrument of the most degraded kind of execution is emblazoned on the banners of armies, borne on the shields of which families are proud, built into our Christian temples of worship, and signed on us when we are first dedicated to Christ. We have ceased to be shocked, or to wonder at the cross. But is it not true, that in ceasing to wonder, we have also in some measure ceased to reflect? For the paradox is as great now as it ever was. That the emblem of a malefactor's death should be thus had in honour, is as full of meaning now, as it was when the first proud Roman hearts learned to bow to the offence of the cross, and to profess One crucified as their Lord and their God. And if we do not feel this incongruity, if we regard Christ's cross as a term naturally bringing with it glory and victory, and a thing to be boasted of, it is because we have forgotten its meaning, and are unconscious of its depths of strange and unapproachable love.

O that we may this day be enabled to meditate profitably on the subject which our text suggests to us, and to see how Christ's cross is Christ's glory; how all that process of sharp suffering, ending in a death of shame, which this week brings before us, not merely leads to

or issues in, but is and constitutes, the glorification of our blessed Redeemer. May that God, who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, purify our spiritual sight, that we may know those things which have been given us of Him.

“The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.” And when was this announcement made? We might well conceive that it belonged to the sayings of that wondrous interval, when His risen body lingered among His disciples on earth, before it was received up to the right hand of God. Or perhaps that it might have been spoken to some of those spirits of the just with whom He sojourned after His burial; that with such an announcement He might have awakened those saints who slept, ere they left their graves on the morn of His resurrection. But to no such time do these triumphant words belong. They pertain to a season of gathering darkness, of sadness and trouble of spirit. It was within six days of that last passover, the greatest passover which the world ever saw. The one Paschal Lamb, —the only true sacrifice ever offered to God, —was already taken up, and awaiting His day. That final journey to Jerusalem, so full of

earnest determination and affecting sympathy, was accomplished. The crowning miracle of Jesus had crowned the enmity of His foes. Lazarus had been called back from Abraham's bosom to the careless brethren of the household ; but it had only proved that those who heard not Moses and the prophets would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. The long-meditated resolve had been definitively taken, to put Jesus to death. How, was not yet decided. The treachery of the recreant Apostle was not yet matured. To this gathering tempest a temporary contrast is presented by an outbreak of popular favour, the result of the great miracle of the raising of Lazarus. The multitudes go forth to meet Jesus. The disciples think that the kingdom of God is immediately about to appear. Down the steep of the Mount of Olives the triumphant procession passes with pealing hosannas, and with palm-branches strewed in the way. But His own soul, far from being elated by this semblance of a triumph, is dwelling on the things which should come upon Him, and on His own, who in their hearts received Him not. When He was come near to the city, He wept over it. And in the incident which led to the words of our text, the same is even more strikingly shewn. In the midst of the popular excitement of this day, certain Greeks, who had come up to worship at the feast, desired to see Jesus ;

that is, I suppose, not merely to behold Him, which they might have done in public at any time, but to gain access to Him in private, perhaps to offer Him homage, or to derive from Him instruction and a blessing. Twice in his life on earth is our Lord acknowledged in his regal office: once at the beginning, when pilgrims from the East came to offer their gifts to Him who was born King of the Jews; and now at the end, when the multitude cried, "Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." And on both occasions distant tribes of the earth desire to see Him, who was to be the light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of His people Israel. Two of the Apostles bring the message to Jesus. And now we enter on the train of thought which is so important for our present purpose.

Christ Himself, as the Gospel of Christ afterwards, was first to be offered to the chosen people, the Jews. Their rejection of Him was to precede the opening of an access to the Gentiles into the Church of God. But this order was not now, as afterwards, merely a matter of decorum or special arrangement. It was now a necessary one, in the very nature of those events by which redemption was to be brought about. It was by the offering of the Body of Christ for the sin of the world, that the difference between Jew and Gentile was to be

abolished, and perfect equality of access to God procured for every inheritor of that flesh of Adam, which the Lord had taken upon Him. Not till this was done, could the Gentile claim God as his God; not till this was done, could all ends of the earth look unto Jesus and be saved. Now the approach and request of these Greeks had very near connexion with this matter. They would gain access to Jesus. But He was not sent, in his ministry in the flesh, except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Before the cross had been endured, and the grave and gate of death passed through, He could not, consistently with his plan and purpose in Redemption, minister to the Gentiles. So that his ministry to the Gentile world must be subsequent to his rejection by His own, not as mere matter of arrangement, but as effect is subsequent to its cause. And this circumstance is the key to the understanding and the context of this otherwise very difficult passage. On receiving the request of these Greeks, our Lord appears at once to regard it as a sign that his hour is come; that his rejection by his own is ripe, and its crowning event prepared. Sad indeed and solemn is this event in prospect. The passion lost none of its bitterness, the cross none of its sharpness, on account of the glory which lay beyond them. WE advance to sorrow and suffering, unknowing of that which shall happen, with our spirits

strengthened to hope for the best, and sustained by trust in Him whose probable care of us we shape according to our own desires; but our Redeemer knew from the beginning all things which should come upon him. Hope, which upholds us by counterbalancing danger, found no place in Him, in the presence of absolute knowledge. The prospect therefore of all that was to come, the malice of his enemies, the desertion of his disciples, the cruel mocking and scourging, the agony and cross, must needs have weighed upon His soul with a weight to which all other human souls are strangers. Yet for the joy set before him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. Just as when He speaks of life and death in his discourses, the mere fact of natural death is absorbed in the glory of the resurrection and the life eternal,—so that He can say, “He that liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die;” so in this his own matter, when the sign occurs that his time is near, his first exclamation takes no account of the sharpness of death, but is full only of the great result of his sacrifice: Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.” Bear, I beseech you, this connexion in mind, while we advance through the rest of this singularly solemn and beautiful reply. Before the Saviour’s eye rises the far-spread Gentile Church, with its vast companies of believers, innumerable

as the grains of corn which are gathered into the granaries;—and then He speaks of the event which is to bring about the glorious harvest, by the simple but deep analogies of nature—of that nature which is His servant, and whose laws, as well as those of the spiritual world, He prescribed:—“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” That is,—His ministry, though He was the Bread of Life, the true wheat sent for the life of the world, would abide alone and profitless, but for the act of Death, through which it was to pass out into wider and nobler life, to carry forward its spiritual organization, and increase and multiply and replenish the earth. And this in accordance with the general law, common to all men, and to the Lord Jesus Himself,—spoken here primarily with reference to Himself, but passing on to us and to all who would see Jesus,—that the life cherished and hoarded, like the wheat cherished and hoarded, is lost, is profitless, and without increase; but the life hated and spent, despised in comparison with the great ends for which it is to be bestowed, is really treasured, being kept unto life eternal. This was His law: He spent his holy life, and He poured out his precious blood,—He was not

sparing of his love nor of his labour, nor of his tears; He coveted no power nor riches, nor even a home on earth; but his self-sacrifice was his self-seeking, his humiliation was his glory, His cross was His throne. And so must it be with all who would see Him, and be His. "If any man serve Me," He continues, "let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve Me, him will my Father honour." The world, *i. e.* for which I die, must die with Me; all who would be glorified with Me must follow in my steps; that honour which I receive from my Father shall also be his who serves and comes after Me.

It is necessary for the full understanding of Christ's cross as Christ's glory, to follow onward for a few verses in the sacred narrative. As yet, the Redeemer has been speaking of the great results of His death. But that death itself, with its attendant circumstances of shame and pain and spiritual desertion, has been ever before him, though He thus spoke; and at last the human feeling is suffered to break forth, "Now is my soul troubled." In such trouble of his soul, not only are we to recognize the universal horror of death of which He as very man, had a share; but there was a horror peculiar to Him as the Son of God. Death is the work of God's enemy, the negation of God's power, the wages of sin, the forerunner of cor-

ruption; and thus to meet death, for Him who was very God as well as very man, had that in it which especially troubled His holy soul. "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say?" Not, it has been well observed, "what shall I *do*?" When St. Paul spoke of being in a strait betwixt two, departing and being with Christ, and abiding in the flesh, he says, "What I shall choose, I wot not¹;" but there is no wavering in the Redeemer's purpose; it is only the trouble of soul which cannot find utterance in that human speech, which though He spake as never man spake, yet sufficed not for this expression. "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." This was the direction of the human wish; as in Gethsemane He prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me." I will just remark that these words are not for a moment to be taken interrogatively, as though it were "Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?" All who study our Lord's discourses at all below the surface, will at once see the impossibility of attributing to Him a form of expression so utterly unworthy of Him, or the solemnity of the time. No; the words are a veritable prayer expressing the phase of feeling passing over His soul at the moment, as was that other in the garden; but as soon superseded as that was, by the great resolve of the Spirit in union with the Father's

¹ Phil. i. 22.

will: "But for this cause came I to this hour:" for this cause, namely, to do that which is now to be done,—to bring about the very effect of which I have just spoken; to drop into the ground and die, that much fruit may be brought forth to Thy glory. And now as then also, the prayer, "Father, save Me from this hour," is turned into that other, expressive of entire unity with His will, "Father, glorify Thy name." And as then there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him, so now the Father Himself bore open testimony to Him before the assembled people—"a voice came from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The past glorifying of God's name was by the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh; by His perfect obedience and unsinning righteousness; by that of which this Evangelist says "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth:"—and the future glorifying was to be by means of that ampler manifestation of righteousness in humanity by the Spirit, to which the death of the Son of God was the door and entrance. And with reference to this wider manifestation our Lord proceeds, after telling them that the voice was not for His sake, but for theirs, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The hour was come for that mighty event, by which the evil that

is in the world was to be detected and separated, and he who ruled and dwelt in the sinful world was to be judged and cast out of it, by the ultimate effect of the Gospel and Spirit of Christ. "And I," he adds, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The great example of divine love shewn in the sacrifice of the Cross shall draw all men, shall become the one central event of the world. As every eye in Israel was directed to the serpent uplifted for healing and life, so shall all ends of the earth look to me and be saved. It seems that the word "*uplifted*" is purposely ambiguous, to include all that high exaltation of which the raising on the cross was but the beginning; but mainly and primarily the Evangelist declares, "This He said, signifying what death He should die."

And now, brethren, we have so far accompanied our Lord's discourse, that we have our subject, "Christ's cross, Christ's glory," complete, by the declarations of His own words. It is His glory, from what we have been explaining, in this fourfold reference:—1. As regards the enemy of God; 2. As regards man; 3. As regards Himself; 4. As regards the Father.

1. As regards the great enemy, it is His glory. We have seen Him during this Lent, resisting the tempter in his assaults on His steadfastness, and overcoming him. But that

was not a complete victory. The devil departed from Him for a season only. He had conquered him personally, and therefore by implication for those also to whom He was to become wedded and joined by the work of redemption ; but the actual and final victory over Satan was achieved on the cross. There the Son of God, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, suffered sin's penalty. The blow of the enemy, aimed at the frail and disobedient head of our race, and so far successful, yet descended in its might on the strong and righteous Head of our race, and so failed of its end and was defeated. He who hoped to crush Adam, was himself crushed in Christ. He who meditated to join humanity to himself and drag it down for ever into the place appointed for him and his angels, saw with dismay humanity taken into the God-head,—and, while he was permitted to vex it and work death on it, yet rescued for ever from his grasp. This was Christ's glory, as regards the enemy ; yea, and more than this. Satan had won his victory by hatred ; Christ's victory over Satan was won by love. Satan, for his own malicious and selfish purpose, had brought ruin and misery into a happy world ; Christ, for his glorious and blessed work, gave himself to sorrow and suffering, his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and his body to the cross and grave, that He might bring out the world into happiness

tenfold as bright and holy as that which Satan ruined. The cross was His true triumph over the adversary, because by it, and by it alone, came in the true judgment of the prince of this world; by it man was knit unto Christ in one Spirit, and that Spirit should convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world was judged; *i.e.* should lift man above Satan and Satan's devices, and enable him to see their nothingness and vanity, and seat him where Christ sits at God's right hand, whence he can look down on the world, and its prince, and its interests, and its follies, and say "Yea, I count them all but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And therefore it is, for all these reasons, that the Apostle, speaking of Christ's triumph over the enemy, chooses the Crucifixion as the occasion of it, and says of the cross, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

2. As regards MAN, the cross is Christ's glory. On it, as has been said, was transacted the central event of man's world. All before, had reference to this; all after, flow forth from it. The whole system of sacrifice, and atonement by types and emblems, found its fulfilment and its end on the cross; the whole state of acceptance in which believers in Christ stand before God, the whole dispensation of the Spirit

under which we live, had its origin and its commencement here. Other great events have been partial in their effects and reference; this alone is universal. Wherever there breathes a man on the face of the earth, there the cross has a deep and never-failing interest. "Jesus Christ and He crucified," is the burden of God's message to every sinner, to look to Him and be saved. But here also was the triumph of human nature. You hear of the powers, the dignity, the excellence of human nature; of its wonderful capacities for knowledge, its high endowments for empire, its glowing affections, its thoughts that wander through eternity. But in none of these did human nature reach its noblest height, nor bear its fairest fruit. Not in the schools of Athens, not in the forum of Rome, not in poesy, not in art, has man been most glorified; but on the cross of Jesus. There manhood bore its only fruit of love untouched by a blight; there it was honoured, not with the frenzy of the poet, nor with the subtlety of the philosopher, nor with the inspiration of the prophet, but with the union of the Godhead, stooping to share its sentence of death, and to bring it through death to glory. This was Christ's glory as regarded man; for here the wound of the world was healed; here man became capable of pleasing God; here that image was restored, which sin had marred. It was the *blood of His cross*, which made peace

between God and man; not His incarnation, nor His spotless life, not His superhuman teaching, nor His rejection, nor His sorrows, but His DEATH, and that only. All else were accompaniments; preparations, if before,—consequences, if after; but this was the efficient and meritorious cause of man's righteousness, and this alone. This was the uplifting of the Son of man, and in Him, potentially, of all the sons of men, to His endless and boundless glory.

3. The cross was Christ's glory, as regarded HIMSELF. "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living²." He was born into the world that He might be a king; and here we have his lordship established, and his kingdom inaugurated. Mark his own words to the penitent thief: "Remember me," he had said, "when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." That is, that day was the kingdom begun; that day its royal prerogatives were exerted, and the grant of life was extended from the King on the cross to the penitent on the cross. Now passed the travail of the Redeemer's soul, on which He shall look through eternity and be satisfied. This was the moment, of which we read, that it was fixed

² Rom. xiv. 9.

and contemplated in the divine counsels before the world began; for Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world³. And not to man's earth alone was Christ's glory in His cross limited. We read that "it pleased the Father, having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." As regards all that He has made and upholds, Christ's cross is His glory. There is no act of His which so eminently characterizes Him, as that accomplished here. When the beloved Apostle was vouchsafed the vision of God's presence in heaven, he saw, and lo, in the midst of the throne was "a Lamb as it had been slain⁴." And besides, it is from the cross that Christ's glory in the work of the Spirit proceeds. He is that stream of living water, which flowed out from the cross to cleanse all sin and uncleanness—that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified⁵," says the Apostle at an earlier period, during His ministry on earth. But when Jesus was glorified, the Spirit went forth from the Father and the Son, and has been since, and shall be ever, glorifying Christ,—taking of the things of Him, and shewing them to His people. The cross then was the highest

³ Rev. xiii. 8.⁴ Rev. v. 6.⁵ 1 John vii. 39 (Greek).

point of the glorification of the person and work of Jesus.

4. And lastly, it was His glory, as regarded the FATHER. By the counsel of the Father's will, was the mighty plan of Redemption directed. The self-denying love of Jesus, His perfect obedience, His truth and righteousness, these all redounded to the glory of the Father who sent Him; and these all found their highest example on the cross. LOVE—for "herein is love, that God loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins:" OBEDIENCE—for "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross:" TRUTH—for "for this end came He into the world, that He should bear witness unto the truth," and He bore it here: RIGHTEOUSNESS—for "He made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And of those high and mysterious purposes of the infinite God which we cannot now fathom, wherein we know that in the depths of His counsels all evil shall be found to have been the condition and seed of good, and His wisdom shall be everlastingly justified, the cross of Jesus will still be His glory. In it His Son glorified Him, and He glorified His great name; manifesting His wisdom, vindicating His justice, and approving His love.

In our meditations during this week on the passion and the cross of Christ, may we never

forget its glory in its shame, nor on the other hand its shame in its glory. May we follow Him through self-denying love, and humble obedience, and cheerful suffering; remembering that what was His glory, must be ours also; that as regards our spiritual enemy, as regards our fellow-men, as regards ourselves, as regards our beloved Saviour, and as regards our Father in heaven, our truest glory is the cross.

SERMON XV.

GOOD FRIDAY.

1854.

HEB. x. 10.

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

For ages had the Church been constrained to approach God with worthless sacrifices. And yet those sacrifices were His own appointing. Man had degraded himself by sin to be a slave, and as a slave he must be treated. And thus he was ordered to come before the God of his spirit with burnt offerings, and to shed the blood of innocent animals to expiate his sins. And what were his sins? Mere outward evidences of a fallen state; mere spots indicating an inward plague; mere dark drops of spray from a fountain of pollution. Even if the blood of bulls and of goats could have atoned for each sin as it was committed, yet the inward plague would have remained unhealed, the pol-

luted fountain uncleansed. But it were absurd to suppose for a moment, that such shedding of blood would procure remission even for individual acts of sin. It could not touch one spot of guilt on man's soul. It could never affect that state of rebellion against God, of exile from His favour, of natural hatred of Him, in which man was involved by sin. The whole system was puerile and transitory. It had its symbolical and educational use, but was in itself of no avail whatever.

And inseparably bound up with it was the sacerdotal system which accompanied. That one man should approach God by means of another, is in itself preposterous and impossible. All are sinners; all have come infinitely short of access to Him: if means of approach are to be provided for any, they must be provided for all. The priestly office, with its duties and dignities, was manifestly no real thing, but a part of the same artificial fabric, belonging to the childhood of the Church, pointing on to something substantial, of which it was the mere shadow cast before.

Now to the insufficiencies of this ceremonial system God's holy law does not stand committed. Nay, while the ceremonial code is introduced, prescribed, hedged about with strict commands and prohibitions by the law, yet never does that law omit to enter its protest against it. "Hath the Lord as great delight in sacri-

fices and burnt offerings as in obeying the will of the Lord?" "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." "Burnt-offering and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, which are by the law, neither hadst Thou pleasure therein." And with regard to the priest too, continued testimony was borne, that he was no superior being, privileged to approach God for the people, but one of them, sinful and needing pardon,—polluted, and needing to be cleansed.

God then had no delight in this system; but it was a necessary consequence of the spiritual blindness which had followed sin, that it should be the best and only access to Him revealed to His chosen people, while the rest of the world remained without even this degree of light;—and all for this great end,—that the Jew, with his moral and ceremonial law revealed from God, and the Gentile, with his moral law written on the conscience, might conspire together to establish the same great result,—that mankind was tainted at the root, and at the root must be healed; that the whole world might be brought in guilty before God, might have worn out and cast aside its own righteousness, and be prepared to receive that righteousness which God would in His time bring in. In the midst then of this preparation, while the Jewish priest was sprinkling the blood of slain sacrifices in the

tabernacle, in which God took no pleasure,—a voice was heard of One who cried, “Lo I come, to do Thy will, O God.” And this, as the Apostle here takes pains to lay down, He said in distinct contrast to those sacrifices. “Above, when He said, sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law: Then said He, Lo I come to do THY WILL, O God: He taketh away the first that He may establish the second.”

And WHAT WAS this will of God? When we read that Jesus came on earth to do the will of Him that sent Him,—when we see Him, as we have done this Lent, standing firm against the tempter in the way of His Father’s will, what idea do we attach to that term?

Let us first explain this. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification,” writes St. Paul¹. And here in like words, “By the which will ye are sanctified.” The will of God then, which Jesus came on earth to fulfil and bring about, was, that we might be sanctified. And how sanctified? The word is one borrowed from the priestly system. It implies, *set apart, consecrated* to God, as His priest, to offer sacrifices to Him. So then when we read that Jesus came here to do God’s will, we mean, He came here that we,—not one, nor a particular race, nor a succession of men, nor thousands of men, but

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

all, every creature under heaven,—might be hallowed and consecrated to God as His priests, to come near each one to Him, and offer sacrifices to Him, acceptable, in which He might delight.

This was the glorious object for which Christ came: to fulfil the Father's will in the eradicating and putting away of that sin, which kept us in the low degraded state of slaves, not knowing what their master did,—and put us into the state of being kings and priests unto our God, partakers of the Spirit of holiness, walking acceptably to Him, and ministering each one of us before Him, offering to Him the sacrifice of ourselves in a pure and spiritual life.

O hear this, dear brethren: that the will of your Father in heaven, the end for which your Redeemer came and suffered, was that every one of you might be a spiritual priest, consecrated to God, serving Him, and glorifying Him, and striving upward to His presence and His glory in a better and a final state. For this you came into life; not to enjoy nor to display yourselves,—not to glitter in the pomp, nor to feast on the luxuries, nor to gain the favours of this wretched world,—but to be strangers and pilgrims here, to be like the Levites of old, without part or inheritance here on which your heart is set, but having God for your inheritance and your portion.

This then was God's will, better than all

sacrifices and burnt offerings. How could the dying cries of victims please Him whose name is Love? But the dedication of man's precious and immortal soul, with all its powers and affections, to Him, this pleases Him; in this sacrifice He delights. This was God's will; but how was it accomplished? His priests must be without blemish; His sacrifices without spot, and what were we? O brethren, if you would appreciate the mighty power of Christ's redemption, and of His sanctifying Spirit, try to fathom the depth of man's corruption by nature, and to measure the height of his exaltation by grace. Think of this world, dedicated to selfishness, sunk in ungodliness, led captive by the devil, changed into an assembly of the hallowed and consecrated servants of God; every man living as seeing Him who is invisible; every harsh word silenced, every unkind thought forgotten, every one rejoicing in others' happiness, all things pure, because man is pure; God dwelling with men, angels conversing with them; no war, nor ambition, nor covetousness, nor envy,—but the sweet savour of holiness going up from the world unto God; so that He may again, as in the beginning, look on every thing that He has made, and behold it is very good.

But how can these things be? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Let God Himself answer. "By the which will we

are sanctified, by the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all." Again however, our difficulty seems to recur. A victim then *has* been offered, and our sanctification, our dedication to God, is made possible, nay is completed. But will not our former reasoning still apply? How should a victim, however noble, in any way affect, by his death and bloodshedding, our state of spiritual pollution? Have we advanced at all, by merely substituting Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, for the victim brought to the horns of the altar and slain by the Jewish priest? If the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, can *a man's* blood take it away any more? Can we for a moment proceed on the principle which regulated the value of the sacrifices of the heathen, which when the danger was great, demanded a victim more than commonly precious,—which was content on ordinary occasions with an ordinary sacrifice, but when empires were in peril, asked for human blood, yea asked kings for the blood of royal virgins, to expiate the divine wrath? Nay, far from us be the thought. For not only should we thus be making God to delight in pain, and sacrifice for sacrifice sake, but we should be forgetting this fundamental principle of God's truth, that no created being may suffer for another, nor make satisfaction for another, but all are equally and separately responsible to their common Creator. Well then, this offer-

ing of the Body of Jesus Christ, what was IT, and what was HE, that such an offering should in any sense suffice for our cleansing and healing? Put not the question from you, nor relax your attention, while I endeavour to answer it; for it is one of vital importance to the clearness and consistency of our faith in Christ's Atonement. WHO IS that Victim whom we see to-day hanging on the cross, his hands and feet pierced, his brow crowned with thorns, his blood poured out from his side, his body offered in sacrifice? He is in fashion as a man. That sacred countenance, bowed in its death agony, has all the intelligence, all the love, all the majesty, which the "human face divine" is capable of expressing. Those emaciated limbs, pale and torn, from which life is fast ebbing away, are ours; he is our brother; he is like one of us. But is he one of us? Is he *a man*? Has he that personality of an individual man, which you and I bear, and by virtue of which we must carry our own human burden, and cannot make agreement to God for one another? No, brethren; this victim is not *a man*. He has not a human *person*. He has *but one* personality, and in that personality he is THE SON OF GOD, the eternal and glorious second Person in the Godhead. No other Person was united with this. The Son of God did not become *a man*. And do not suppose this to be a subtle metaphysical

distinction merely. It is exceedingly important, fundamentally important, to be ever borne in mind. *A man* did not suffer for the sin of the world. The death of Jesus was not vicarious in the sense of *one man suffering for another*, which would be most repugnant to God's justice, as reflected in the consciences of us all. Well, but was not that Victim truly MAN, very man as we are? Yes, brethren, blessed be God, He was; the Man Christ Jesus; He was our Brother, we are His flesh and His bones; and yet I repeat, He was *not a man*. He, the everlasting Son of God, took upon him our nature. He took upon him, not a human personality, so that He should be two persons, God and a man at the same time; but He took into the Godhead, into union with his divine Person and nature, the manhood, the entire nature of man, the one nature and flesh and blood, and capacities and sympathies of a human soul. And thus He was God manifest in the flesh; very God, in being in person and essence and nature the eternal Son of the Father,—and very Man, in being born into the world of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Well then, let us go on to enquire, what is that Body of Christ, which we see to-day hanging pierced and torn on the cross. If it were *my* body, it would be the body of *a man*; and supposing that its being offered up would be of any use to me in expiating my own sins, there the

benefit would stop; I am hedged about by my own individuality, and the sacrifice of me could never pass over to another, nor be set down to another's account. But that Victim had no human individuality. That Body there hanging, there pierced and torn, did not belong to one man, hereafter to be summoned to give account of himself to God, and separated, in that account, from all his fellow-men; but it belonged to the Son of God, our Maker and our Redeemer, who was pleased to reveal Himself in it for our Redemption, and it was not the Body of *a man*, but the Body of MAN—of mankind—the pattern, and centre, and root, and head, of that nature which is common to all of us, in which every human being, of all nations, kindreds, and languages, has a share. So that the flesh of Christ is HIS flesh, as He is God; the property and the tabernacle of God, in a peculiar manner His own; but in it He has no *human* property; the human property in it is vested in all the sons and daughters of Adam; it is *my* flesh and *your* flesh, and the flesh of ALL OF US, as we are men; the common property of us all, so that in it we are summed up and represented; and when it was offered up, we were offered up; “if one died for all, then all died².” And so when that Victim hung on the cross, it was not a slaying of one mere man for another, which is impossible;

² 2 Cor. v. 14 (Greek).

it was not a mere symbolic sacrifice, like those under the old law; but it was the offering up of HUMAN NATURE, in its Head and its root,—a taking away of sin by its penalty being paid to the utmost. Now do we understand this? Because there is much obscurity and misapprehension about this all-important matter; and though words are feeble, and thoughts are feeble, and human powers are feeble, to set forth the Redeemer's sufferings aright,—yet as far as we *can* see, we ought to make a point of seeing clearly and scripturally, and not be content with shallow and inconsistent and erroneous views of the great Fact by which we stand before God.

I will hope that we do understand thus far, and will follow on yet a little further. What was the EFFECT of this sacrifice on the cross? the immediate, universal effect? At once, human nature, our manhood, all mankind, was in the sight of the Father acquitted from the guilt of sin, and received into His favour. “God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them³.” A fountain was opened for sin and uncleanness. The veil was rent, and the way to the holiest for ever laid open. And from that time the glad tidings have been sent abroad to every creature under heaven, and “Christ in you the hope of glory,” “the Son of God manifest in your flesh,” has

³ ■ Cor. v. 19 (Greek).

been the message carried over all the world to sinners, accompanied by the exhortation "Be ye reconciled to God." This is now all that remains to be done. Sin is put away. The Lord Jesus hath by Himself purged our sins. No more mention is made of sin before God; no more sacrifice remains for it. They who continue in their sins, must die in their sins, and in the nature of things must perish everlastingly: not because Christ did not bear their sins in his Body on the tree, but because they will have none of His redemption, and will not come to Him to be healed of their deadly disease.

We have now then seen in some measure, how this victim and this sacrifice differed from all other victims and sacrifices ever offered. We have I think abundantly justified what we said at the beginning, that all those sacrifices were puerile and insufficient, and I hope, shewn you one reason at least why THIS was all-sufficient and final. Other reasons of equally deep interest might be specified and insisted on; but I keep to-day to this one, because I do not want to spread out our energies of attention over many points, but to concentrate them on that one point, to which I now return.

By this sacrifice we are sanctified,—dedicated to God,—hallowed to His service. We are enabled to approach Him by Christ without fear

as our reconciled Father, and to do, by faith in Christ, works well pleasing to Him. The point I wish to insist on is this.

We need no other sacrifice for sin. The sin of the world has once for all been taken away by the Lamb of God. As you have seen, this was the only sacrifice which could take away sin; being the payment of its penalty in full by Him who had taken our nature into Himself. Clearly, THIS can never be renewed. The penalty is paid, the bond is cancelled; it was nailed to the cross, it was cast into the sepulchre, it has passed out of God's sight; our Surety has been released. All is done, as far as *satisfaction* is concerned. Let none ever persuade you, that you need a repetition of sacrifice for sin. Let none ever persuade you, that your deeds can atone for your sins, or that the tears of your repentance wash out its guilt: *all that* has been done by Christ on the cross; and the finality, and sufficiency, and virtue, of that sacrifice, not myriads of ages, were this sinful world to last so long, could ever exhaust. Let none deceive you by specious words, true in their proper sense, but often falsely applied, in which the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood is represented as a sacrifice. It is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but it is not a sacrifice in any other sense. It is a shewing forth of Christ's death, it is a commemorating of Christ's death, it is a partaking

by faith of the benefits of Christ's death; but it is not a repeating of Christ's death,—not, in any possible sense of the words, an offering up of Christ. It is true, and inspired lips have declared it, “We have an altar⁴.” Yes, brethren, but that altar is the cross. On it our Victim bled, our atonement was made; and on it we, His followers and disciples, must be crucified to the world; on it we, His priests, must offer ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice unto Him. In this sense, and this only, do we Christians know of any altar of continuing sacrifice—but our *sacrifice for sin* was once for all made in Christ, and never can be renewed.

And with sacrifice, *priesthood* has ceased, in all external acceptation of the term. Every Christian man, woman, and child, is a priest unto God,—has access to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and needs no man on earth, and no saint in heaven, as a mediator through whom to approach God. If the idea of a mediating priesthood was vain and untenable even before Christ, and was shewn to be so in the law itself, it is presumptuous and ridiculous now. He is our only Priest, who stands in the presence of God, and pleads the merits of His most precious blood for us; and for any among men to usurp, or pretend to share His right, is blasphemy. I have endeavoured to shew you the

⁴ Heb. xiii. 10.

universality of His sacrifice, as including the whole of our nature. Follow out for a moment that train of thought. He has lifted every one of you into a position, from which there is no safe escape by leaning on other men, or by leaning on ordinances, or by any thing but personal exercise on your own part of the right of access to God which He has procured for you. Ministers you have, to serve you in holy things, to exhort you, to spend their labour on the Word, and lay forth their treasures to you: you may see and hear them called priests, but it is *πρεσβύτεροι*, the elders of the congregation, not *ιερείς*, sacrificers. This last, in its highest sense, never existed but once, in Him who offered Himself without spot to God for you; and even in its lower sense can be only exemplified by yourselves, who must take up and exercise each one your priesthood, offering to God spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Him through Christ.

And never forget, brethren, in conclusion, that this sanctification, which is God's will brought about by Christ's sacrifice, though it begin in consecration to Him and the privilege of an individual Christian priesthood, yet ends not, till body, soul, and spirit be made entirely holy by that indwelling Spirit of Christ, whom all possess who are united to Him by faith. Of Him, and His work, let us hope to say much to you, when the progress of the Christian year

leads us to the fulfilment of the Father's promise at the season of Pentecost.

And come, I beseech you, this day to His table with a thankful remembrance of His death, and as by it accepted in Him; come as His consecrated Priests, emboldened and authorized by this day's great sacrifice to offer to the Father by Him yourselves, your souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him, to His eternal praise and glory.

SERMON XVI.

EASTER DAY.

1854.

JOHN xiv. 19.

“Because I live, ye shall live also.”

THE LORD IS RISEN. O words of joy after the night of mourning! words of triumph after the shame of defeat! the height of glory after the depth of dishonour!

THE LORD IS RISEN. The tomb is empty. One after another, single or in groups, the little band of His followers hasten to the sepulchre. The first company indeed had gone on far other errand. The hurry of the evening of the preparation, on which He was crucified, had permitted only scanty care to be taken of His beloved remains. True to their office and their character here as ever, with love surviving the death of hope, the faithful women came to supply this lack of service, bringing with them spices and ointments for His Body. But

they were met by celestial messengers of glad tidings,—“He is not here, He is risen: why seek ye the living among the dead?”

THE LORD IS RISEN. But when He rose, no eye beheld. None was permitted to witness that mysterious reanimation of the body long silent in death, that casting off of the cerements which bound it, that passing out from the sepulchre closed and sealed, before the angel had descended, or the earthquake taken place, or the stone been rolled away. The Lord's shame had been public. Multitudes gazed on His emaciated form as He hung on the cross, and scoffed at the King of Israel dying the death of a recreant slave. When *men* have been put to public shame, they demand that the reparation shall be public also; because they are chary of their fame, and think they can afford to lose none of the estimation of their fellows. But it is the glory of God to conceal a matter; and the triumph of His blessed Son no multitude witnessed; no apostle was spectator of that fact, to which it was afterwards the office of all the Apostles to witness. God, who looks to the end from the beginning, can afford to hide His mighty works, which shall be manifested in their due time, and wisdom justified of all her children.

THE LORD IS RISEN. Again and again, through that strange day of uncertainty, and fluttering hearts, and awakening hopes, are the

words sounded in the ears of the incredulous disciples. First came Mary Magdalene and her company, with their vision of angels; but their tidings were rejected as idle tales, and they believed them not. Peter and John had, it may be, been already convinced, and had gone, despairing perhaps of convincing the rest, to their own homes. Then come thick and fast the repeated evidences that it is indeed so, and no idle tale. What wonder, if on such a day, it should be found impossible to reduce the various incidents to precise order of time, or to piece them exactly together? Scarce believing for joy the evidence of their senses, each treasuring his own cherished proof that the Lord had risen, what wonder if afterwards, when the narratives came independently to be drawn up, they should seem to interfere and clash with one another? What day of unexampled revulsion of feeling would not present the same phænomena? I have been told, that after a lamentable catastrophe, which unhappily signalized the first opening of those wonderful lines of communication which now traverse every where this and other countries,—several truthful and prudent persons who were eye-witnesses of it, met together and conferred on what they had seen. Every one was sure of the fact: that remained, the basis of all their testimony, undoubted, and alas too patent to

all. But my informant assured me, that apparent discrepancies characterized their narratives, precisely similar to those found in the records of this day of the Resurrection. It seemed impossible to piece them together. Each saw intensely, and felt keenly, and remembered exclusively, his own side of the sad transaction. And had there been exact accordance in every minute point in the accounts of this day's events, it would have been to my mind a considerable weakening of the joint testimony of the Evangelists. It would have been unnatural in the last degree, that men whose hearts all this day were throbbing high with hope and fear, could have so accurately and so calmly obtained a detailed chronological account of all that happened; as unlikely, as that mariners, scattered in the wild tempest, could see over the huge waves which separate them, or enter keenly into the pursuit and narration of any escape, but their own. Had I found such exact accord, I should have been much more disposed to suspect collusion, to imagine that the Evangelists had seen one another's accounts, and fitted them into their own, than now, when every thing bears the impress of truth, — of four true narratives, delivered independently of one another, all under divine inspiration and guidance, but that not extending to the removal of the phænomena

of human character, or nullifying the influence of circumstance and feeling on human narration.

THE LORD IS RISEN. Let us come to the fact itself. Whichever band of women came first to the sepulchre,—whether the Saviour met the first or the second, or Mary Magdalene alone,—whatever be the clue now lost to us, which could, if preserved, have led us safely through the tangled history of the hours of this day,—no fact on earth has ever been so strongly attested; from so many various points, by so many independent witnesses, in spite of such cruel discouragements. And WHAT IS the fact? What do these words, “The Lord is risen,” imply, with regard to Him, and with regard to us?

HE LIVES. In Him was life. He was the Prince, the Author of Life. He submitted to die for the sin of the world. Dire was the necessity,—fearful the contrast; the Lord of LIFE, to DIE. And thus it was impossible that He should be holden of death. For a time appointed by the Father, foreshadowed in type and prophecy, his Body lay in the tomb, his Spirit dwelt in the abode of the departed; but it was not for death to triumph over him; corruption was not suffered to scatter that fearful and wonderful frame, which had been the tabernacle of the living God. And after that appointed time had past, He lived again in our nature; He resumed

the body of the flesh temporarily laid aside ; He resumed not, for He never laid aside, the human soul, which was taken into and united with the divine Spirit ; He became again strictly and entirely MAN. But no longer the Man of sorrows ; no longer subject to weariness and pain and death ; in that He died, He died unto sin once ; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. He has resumed the body of His humanity, but it is now a glorified Body, a Body freed from the laws to which He before submitted it, of space and motion ; a Body retaining indeed its distinguishing features and marks,—the print of the nails on his hands and feet, the wound of the spear in his side ; still no longer the body of our vileness, but the Body of His glory. Not as others rose from the grave, did He rise. When Lazarus was called forth by Him with the renewed breath of life, he dwelt for a time on the earth, and returned again to dust ; but when Jesus rose from the tomb, He dwelt awhile on the earth, and was received up into glory. He had life in Himself. As He could not be holden of death, so He could not return to it. He ever liveth. As man, at this moment, with that same Body of glory in which He was taken up from us, He sits at God's right hand, above all majesty and power and dominion, and every name that is named, in heaven and earth and under the earth.

He liveth:—and now what does our text announce to us from His own lips as the consequences of that His life? “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Immense consequences shall result from this resumption of His Body, and reunion of it in its resurrection form to His Godhead and His glorified Humanity.

Let me for a moment recapitulate the substance of my sermon on the morning of Good Friday. It was my object then to give a consistent and scriptural account of the effect of the death of Christ. I said that in it our human nature paid the penalty of sin in its head and root. One died for all; and therefore all died;—and sin, the sin of the world, was put away. That body which hung on the cross, was His Body; but it was ours also, the common property of our whole race; and by the sacrifice of it we are cleared of guilt before God, and accepted by Him. When we look on this His Body, we look on the second Adam, as truly the head and representative of all our race as the first Adam was, when he stood alone in the world, with us all summed up in him. Now carry on this view from the cross through the grave to the resurrection. With Him WE died; I am at this moment speaking of all humanity, the godly and ungodly, the converted and unconverted, the saved and the lost:—in and by His death the sin of the world, regarded as ONE SIN, was removed,

and thus the whole race died in their Head. What then was the Resurrection? What, but the resurrection of the whole race likewise? "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Words cannot be plainer; and it is to be observed that though by shallow modern theology it has been attempted to evade their force, and to understand them "shall all be made alive who shall live," no such idea was entertained by the ancients, even by those who did not generally go deep into doctrines. They, as well as all the best of the moderns, take the words in their plain simple unlimited meaning. And undoubtedly such has been the effect of the resurrection of Christ. "In Christ shall ALL be made alive." There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. In this lowest, but evident sense, "because He lives, we shall live also." Every body of man shall one day be reanimated; known, as His Body was known, by its distinguishing marks and features; built up again by Him who built it up at first,—and reunited to the human soul, which has been waiting in the abode of the departed the fulness of the Father's time.

But it may be said, has Christ's resurrection then won for us no more than this,—which after all amounts, in the case of a vast number of mankind, to an eternity of woe? Let the objector pause, before he urges this consideration.

Does he not himself acknowledge LIFE to be a precious gift of God—so precious, that in whatever depth of misery he is involved, provided only reason retain her sway within, he will submit to any privation, risk any danger, face any foe, rather than part with it? If man have made this life a burden, which is in reality God's precious gift, does this diminish, or should this bring into question, the beneficence of the Creator? And so likewise is it here. Christ's resurrection hath brought in life,—life glorious, life eternal; life whose real and best state it is, to be ever with God; in God's kingdom, and beholding Christ's glory, and doing His work. What if they who choose to abide in sin, who do not choose to come to Him that they may have this best life, turn His gift into a curse—life eternal into eternal death; have we any right to arraign His redeeming love for man's unworthiness? His gift is LIFE: "because I live, ye shall live also:" that nature which died on His cross, which went down into His tomb, came up out of that tomb with and in Him, and therefore man, every man, shall in body, soul, and spirit, live for ever; whether in bliss or in woe, is left for every man to choose, and by that choice he shall be judged.

Such then is the result of Christ's resurrection on *all*,—on, as I said, the godly and ungodly, the converted and the unconverted—the real Christian and the heathen Christian alike.

But that higher and more glorious phase of this eternity of existence in the risen body, for whom is that reserved? Let us endeavour by God's help to enter into this matter. And in order to it, we must say a few words on the scriptural account of the constitution of man. Unfortunately this latter has been somewhat disguised by representation in our own language, which is essentially an unphilosophical one, and incapable of representing the accurate distinctions of that tongue, which God prepared in the schools of Athens and Alexandria to receive the Gospel of His Son. The Scripture account of man describes him as composed of BODY, SOUL, and SPIRIT. The former we possess in common with all organized matter; the organization being nobler as we advance upwards through the tribes of creation, and reaching its highest point in man. The second, the SOUL (I speak now in the proper, not in the popular sense of that term), we possess in common with all conscious beings. It is that which is the seat of the instincts and appetites and affections; and as the body, so this is found in various degrees of inferiority or dignity in different tribes of animals, reaching again its highest in us. We possess in it not only all that the lower animals have, but superadded to that, the power of thought, and those faculties which characterize the action of the human mind. Then thirdly, beyond and above the

soul with its desires and faculties bodily and mental, is the SPIRIT, which we alone of all created beings on this earth possess. The spirit—the seat of the reason, and of the conscience, and of our responsibility,—is immortal and imperishable. It is that lofty part of man's inner being in which he communes with the Deity: it is that part wherein dwell all convictions of sin, all apprehensions of Christ, all testimonies of God's Spirit; in a word, all his better and higher life.

Now in the worldly and the ungodly, this highest part of their being is crushed down, superseded, neglected, made subservient to the flesh—to the animal soul and its desires. The natural understanding, darkened by the lusts of the flesh, is allowed to supersede the higher faculties, and such persons are called in the word of God *unspiritual*, or mentioned by an epithet for which our language has no correspondent word, but which I can represent to you by telling you that for the animal worldly soul the term is $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, and that these persons are called $\psi\upsilon\chi\iota\kappa\omicron\iota$. We render it "*carnal*," which is unfortunate—for it does not mean men of the flesh merely (although these are often elsewhere opposed to men of the spirit), but men who only care about their *souls*, their animal, intellectual, worldly life, and have no care for their spirits, their immortal, divine, spiritual life. Now we are ready to draw the

distinction, and to answer the question which I asked above.—ALL are united to Christ in the *flesh*. His Body was our Body; and the unbeliever, as well as the believer, is one *flesh* with Christ. All have the same animal and intellectual *soul* which Christ took upon Him; all, unbeliever as well as believer, are sharers in the immortality which He conferred on our nature by His resurrection, as far as this is concerned in it. All *have* the same immortal spirit: but here comes in the difference. The man who has degraded that spirit by which he should have reached out after God, who has never sprinkled it with Christ's atoning blood, nor had God's Spirit dwelling in it, he shall live for ever in one sense, by virtue of the resurrection of Christ, by which he in his humanity is united to Him:—but how live for ever? In no spiritual life or enjoyment of God, in no apprehension of Him; for he has rejected the Son of God; his spirit has been crushed down and set at nought in this state of preparation; has been enslaved to sin, and to the lower powers of his nature; his animal soul has never been purified and raised, his body never made the temple of the Holy Spirit; and thus for him is reserved a final state of banishment from the presence of God and disappointment of all the high ends of his being. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." But in the opposite case of the spiritually minded, of those who

have learned to look above the world and its animal enjoyment and its intellectual power and pride, and to seek after the Father of their spirits by believing on the Son of His love,—they are united to Christ not only in the flesh, not only in the animal and intellectual soul, but in the spirit also. This highest part of their humanity is made one with Christ. It is cleansed from the guilt of sin by His atoning sacrifice appropriated to them by faith. It is led by the Spirit of God, renewed by His quickening influence, dwelt in by Him, and made by degrees holy as He is holy. They alone are truly risen with Christ, in the full and blessed sense of the words. They are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with Him in glory.

Let us here take up the description in the inspired words of St. Paul, speaking in the course of the very same argument which I am now pursuing, to believers in Christ: “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that

dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together¹.”

So then, dearly beloved in Christ, that do truly receive Him as your Saviour, and are walking by the faith of the Son of God,—because He lives, we shall live also: live, not in the sense of mere eternal existence, but in the glorious sense of being changed, body, soul, and spirit, into the perfect image of our Redeemer. Our bodies, now the source to us of temptation to sin, of pain and sorrow, which must soon become more and more feeble, and at last yield to death and decay, shall be brought up out of the grave, changed so as to be like unto His glorious Body, free from sin and disease,—the fit temples and ready instruments of blessed spirits; our souls, no longer subservient to grovelling appetite, nor subject to the misuse of

¹ Rom. viii. 9—17.

their powers, shall be for ever employed in loving Him and searching into His works, and His perfections, and the mysteries of His love ; and our spirits, quickened and penetrated by His Spirit, made one Spirit with Him, shall be lifted into holier and more rapturous states of beatitude than we can now even faintly conceive.

O glorious day, when it shall once more be said, not of the personal body of Christ merely, but of His whole mystical body,—THE LORD IS RISEN—when the dust of death shall burst into life, and the ambient air shall hardly suffice for the utterance of the chorus of praise ;—when long-lost friends shall clasp one another with the embrace of eternity, and never-forgotten voices once more be heard ;—when the risen Saviour shall once more walk among us, and our hearts shall burn within us as He expounds to us the things concerning Himself ;—when the disciples shall again be glad at seeing the Lord—shall awake up in His likeness, and shall be satisfied.

O may the Father, in whose power are the times and seasons, look down on this weary world now again entering on the death-throes of a bloody war, and shuddering under His heavy hand ;—may He in mercy shorten the night of weeping, and bring in the morning of joy. May the Son, our pitiful and mighty High Priest, our risen and glorified Redeemer, soon

finish His intercession in the Holy Place, and come forth and bless us; may the Spirit, who out of darkness and anarchy created light and order, move now again in the end of the world over our troubled and dark waters, and bring forth from them ere long the everlasting Day, which no night shall quench.

SERMON XVII.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 1854.

HUMILIATION DAY FOR THE WAR.

JER. iv. 10.

“Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely Thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.”

THE proper interpretation of these words will be manifest to every well-ordered mind. They contain an expression of deep disappointment at the frustration of a nation's hopes of peace, and at the mysteriousness of the divine purposes. The strong language made use of by the prophet must be understood by applying those axioms, which lie at the foundation of our conception of God. He cannot lie nor deceive. But His purposes go forward with a vastness of design and comprehension, which entirely surpasses the grasp of any human calculations; and thus their course appears to deceive those, who had prejudged their intentions and career.

We fancy we see God moving in His central pathway; we can trace the awful wheels of His chariot; we almost seem to stand by His side, and aid in directing the destinies of mankind; but by some dark and sudden dispensation of His providence, we find our wisdom to have been a phantom, our prophetic discernment a delusion; and are forced to confess with abasement, that as the heaven is high above the earth, so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways.

And the words, thus understood, seem to describe to us, with some exactness, our own past and present state. We have been dwelling now for many years in peace, as remarkable as it was cheering and beneficial. The last great and calamitous war issued in new arrangements founded on that collective wisdom of the States of Europe, which had been gained by dearly-bought experience. And with such prudence were they formed, that although during the long period of eight-and-thirty years, one portion and another of the great European fabric had been internally shaken, the whole maintained its equilibrium. Again and again, the prophets of evil had been disappointed. Misunderstandings apparently pregnant with mischief, yielded to the common sense and good feeling of rival nations. More than once, but on one occasion in particular, of recent memory, the struggles of popular commotion broke forth in the con-

tinental states; but the strong arm of military power prevailed, and all again was still. So that men's minds had gradually settled into a conviction that God was saying "Ye shall have peace." The very dangers that had been overcome, strengthened the security. Each alarm, as it rung out and subsided, seemed to prove more satisfactorily that all alarms were futile. It was not uncommon to hear in general society and from sober-minded men, that the period of universal peace had arrived; that the deep feeling among mankind of the wickedness and the horrors of war, had rendered another war impossible. Nay, some amiable persons had even gone so far, as to propose arrangements for the future by which, in their imagination, warlike collision might be for ever avoided.

Such extreme views were, I should imagine, entertained by exceedingly few, and those few not very observant nor sagacious; but it cannot be denied, that there was a general impression among all ranks and orders of persons in this country, that the recurrence of war was exceedingly improbable; that men were so convinced, to say nothing of higher motives, of its ruinous effects upon commerce and financial prosperity, that every effort would be used by the rulers of the nations, to avert such a calamity. And this general impression was strengthened by a survey of the important fruits which the season

of peace had brought forth. Powers unknown before seemed to have been bestowed upon mankind; vast advances too have been made in all that ennobles and civilizes and ameliorates our species. The contrast between peace and war has been immensely deepened. The comforts of our homes had been yearly advancing to perfection; but the miseries of war remained unaltered. Was it likely, that men would rashly accept the alternative, now more dreary and bitter by comparison than ever?

Then again, our holy religion had undoubtedly made great and signal progress since the outbreak of the last war. Do not suppose me insensible to the vast work yet to be done by the Gospel among our population, nor unaware of the dark and desert tracts still unoccupied, if I remind you of that which has been done, and the ground of which by God's blessing we have taken possession. If any class of society, as it now is, be compared with the same class at the period to which I refer, considerable improvement, at least in reference to the external requirements of Christianity, is traceable. And this again made men distrust the occurrence of another war. They could not conceive, that we at least should fall so far back again from our religious advances, as to rush to arms for revenge, which the Gospel forbids,—or for conquest, which is alike a violation of its plainest

maxims. We forgot perhaps, how many cases might arise, involving neither these nor any other motive inconsistent with the character of Christians, which might force us against our will to take up arms.

Other things too we perhaps suffered to pass unnoticed. We forgot how many elements there were in our own and in European society, at variance with the supposition that all was to continue thus ; how little the sky looked like the dawn of the millennial day. We forgot, that in the world's past history, not only have sunshine and storm ever drifted past one another over the portion which is the theatre of mankind's progress, but that as that progress has been carried onward, and the intervals of sunshine may have increased in length and serenity, so the storms have gathered darker, and widened in their extent of devastation. We forgot perhaps, that amidst many mysterious sayings of prophecy, this at least is clear and certain,—that the death-throes of this present state shall far surpass in intensity and horror all troubles which have gone before ; and that in the gradual unfolding of events by God's providence, though that period may be yet distant, it is at least likely that the ages which approach to it will be tinged by its deepening gloom ; that as truth and justice and purity become more defined and asserted by man's progress, falsehood and evil

and tyranny will collect also in more concentrated antagonism, till the final struggle is prepared, and the time of the end shall come.

These things, and others, we perhaps overlooked in our prosperity and our confidence. And now all the fabric of our hopes is dashed to the ground. Our fair prospects of peace have vanished, and a war has commenced, which will involve in its consequences the whole civilized world: whose results not the boldest can predict, nor the most ingenious even imagine.

It is that we may all of us feel this aright,—that we may enter on our new and awful condition with a proper sense of subjection to God and in dependence on His help,—that our Sovereign has proclaimed to-day the cessation of our worldly labours, and has called us together in our houses of prayer.

And in dealing with this the main portion of our subject, let me first call your attention to the state of war itself, as regarded from a Christian point of view, and then to the spirit with which we ought to enter into and be employed in it.

The Prophet's words in my text point out sadly, but truly, the real nature of war. "The sword reacheth unto the soul." For so it is, wherever the consequences of war are felt. We, as yet, have only witnessed the excitement and interest accompanying its commencement. We have hailed the departure of our armies for

the scene of combat, because we were urged by the same generous enthusiasm which animated them, when they cheerfully left their homes and went to spend their lives at their country's bidding. As yet, all the glow and excitement of approaching conflict is fresh, and the sad realities which it will bring with it are distant and little thought of. As yet, the note of preparation reaches only to the more tumultuous feelings, which are so ready in every breast to respond to the call of duty, or high honour, or justice to the oppressed ; but "the sword reacheth unto the soul." When the conflict shall once have actually begun, and the melancholy lists arrive which each family shall scan with breathless anxiety, then we shall first see what war really is. When in a moment it shall be known in this city, that the stay of a hundred families is gone,—that the young and promising have been swept away ; or when, worse still, the fatal ravages of disease in unaccustomed climates and haunts of pestilence have brought all the calamity, without the glory,—then shall it be known what we imperil in war, and for how small a return ; when our country receives back, for the noble forms and gallant hearts whom she sent out, only the urn and ashes. Then shall the burden of war be felt over many a day, by many a family, when lingering years of pain and watching and feebleness become the

inevitable conclusion of a service entered in athletic health and joyous vigour. And all these bitter results, as there is no fear for a moment of their prospect making a brave man faint-hearted, or a determined nature to vacillate, so they are very fitting and necessary to be placed before you at the beginning of a war, as its inevitable fruits; that none may enter it with mere light-heartedness, but with solemnity and well-weighed earnestness. For true courage is not to ignore nor to despise disastrous consequences, but to weigh them all, and resolve, if it be God's will, to meet them.

Then "the sword will reach to the soul" in another sense,—which, though it may seem to savour of the trivialities of every-day life, yet has a real existence, and must not be omitted on an occasion like this. It is not possible that a time of general war should be a time of domestic ease and prosperity. Vast efforts will be required of us. And not only must the burdens of the state be raised in proportion,—a contingency which, however it may be well borne by the rich, reaches the very life and daily meal of the poor,—but from the scarcity of hands and necessarily high price of labour, enterprise must be discouraged, and multitudes must deeply suffer. Ruin of prospects and fortunes, in peace usually brought on by rash speculation and imprudence, becomes the result

of stern and inevitable necessity ; and falls not on an individual here and there, but on whole classes indiscriminately.

And add to these sufferings the fact, sad indeed for the ministers and promoters of religion, that whereas in peace the minds of men are but backward to receive the gentle and holy maxims of Christianity, in war the very aspect and state of the national mind is and must be in a great measure antichristian. Bad passions are recognized as the legitimate channels of feeling towards those whom war teaches us to call our enemies ; and the very recommendation of kindness towards them appears inconsistent with duty, and unpatriotic. Sad state indeed, which requires of men to think and feel towards one another in opposition to the law of love which our Saviour has bound upon His followers. And correspondent with men's feelings are their actions. Far be it from me to deny that the dealings of our commanders, even towards their enemies, are sure to be regulated by a high sense of that which is accounted honourable by the recognized laws of warfare ; but can it at the same time be denied, that those laws themselves are pushed to the very verge, nay beyond the verge, of that which can in any sense be accounted true and fair ? Could any commander assert, setting aside actual combat itself, that his acts in war to-

wards his enemies had been, or were likely to be, such as he could justify as between man and man, if the state of conflict had not existed? And all this tends to blunt the moral feelings,—to shut the ear and deaden the conscience and put a nation back in religion, and in all that is truly great and good.

I have been speaking as yet only of the sufferings and disadvantages of war to a nation like our own, far removed by position from the actual din of the contest and the trappings of armies. But if we extend our view to those unhappy lands where the conflict is actually raging, O what heart can conceive, what pen can describe the horrors of war there? Already we hear of villages and towns sacked and burnt,—given up to plunder, and murder, and outrage worse than these; already we read of the miserable inhabitants flying in terror from their threatened homes, of vast tracts of fertile land exhausted of support for men or cattle, of thousands driven helpless and hopeless from the land of their sojourn, to meet anarchy and misery at home. These things are but the beginning of sorrows. As wars continue, the countries which have been the seat of them are gradually depopulated; desolation succeeds to culture, and solitude to the busy haunts of men. Thus it has been with Nineveh, thus with Babylon, thus with Carthage. And thus it may

be with cities whose names are now, and have long been, associated with grandeur, and power, and prosperity.

In short, in time of war God's hand of judgment is uplifted. Earth lies prostrate at His feet, awaiting the blow. None can tell where it may descend. No individual, no household, no nation can be secure. Least of any time do events follow human calculation. The lives of men are doubly precarious; yet upon those lives, more than at any time, important issues depend. So that war is the saddest possible exhibition of human corruption and of human weakness. Of human corruption,—that after all which has been done by the Holy Spirit of God in penetrating the lump of mankind with His leaven, such things should again and again recur, as lead to hostile collision; and of human weakness, that God's Church should find itself ever and anon drawn into the camp against its will, and subjected by His providence to so severe a discipline, as seems almost to set aside what Christ has done, and deny our adoption in Him.

And now, brethren, we come to the great question of this day,—How ought we to meet, and enter, and continue in, such a lamentable state of suffering, of feeling, and of acting? How, as Christians—how, as patriots? As Christians, we *may* enter it, earnestly and heartily. Let it not be forgotten, that the first

fruit of the Gentile world to Christ was a centurion in the armies of Rome; as if God in His providence had vouchsafed to give by anticipation this reply to those who might hereafter question the lawfulness of warfare for the disciples of Christ. And as Christians, let us remember that our first practical duty is obedience to those who are set over us: an embracing cheerfully, and carrying out diligently, that which in the exercise of their legitimate power they have been led to prescribe for us. This I say would be our duty in every case, even in those which least approved themselves to our own view of expediency, and sense of public justice. But how much more, when the call is such an one as the present—when we have not taken up the sword for revenge, nor for conquest, nor to aid the ambition of others,—but in defence of the very first principles of common justice and outraged right; when we stand not on the side of the subverters of thrones and enemies of legitimate power, but on the side of the liberties of mankind, against their common adversary; when we have not flown to arms at the first provocation, but exhausted previously all attempts at arbitration and pacific settlement. Surely if there ever were a time when a Christian man could enter on the state of war with fervent prayer for the divine blessing, it is the present. Let this then be our first care, to implore God's blessing on our

armies and our fleets; to pray for them, that they may be able instruments in His hand for staying the fury of the oppressor; that it may please Him to give a speedy and successful issue to the measures taken by our Sovereign and her allies to restore peace to the nations. While our brave countrymen contend in the field, let us contend at the throne of grace: be our armies collected here on each successive Lord's Day, and it may be on other solemn occasions like this: let our weapons be faith and hope and prayer, and let it be proved, that under our Captain, the Lord of Hosts, "they also serve, who only stand and wait."

But let not our prayer be unaccompanied with deep humiliation before God. His chastising hand is over us. It is for our sins, and for the sins of our age, that He has brought us into this state of war, and certainty of suffering. And O if we look back upon our conduct during the long period of peace which He has vouchsafed us, how deep and how many have those sins been. He has blessed us with unexampled increase of wealth and commerce and population. He has given us a church more able, we believe, than any other, efficiently to carry out all the blessed ends for which our Lord founded His Church on earth: with simple rites, with an open Bible,—with nothing to fear, but every thing to hope, from the spread of light and knowledge. But where has been mean time

our spiritual provision for the vast multitudes which have grown up about us? Is it not, for instance, a foul and standing blot on the enormous wealth and luxury of this metropolis, that there should be even at this moment, many hundreds of thousands of its inhabitants entirely deprived of the possibility of worshipping God in public? For national sins of this kind, God's hand now lies heavy on us: and for these sins ought we to-day, and at all times, deeply to humble ourselves. And all humiliation is mere hypocrisy, unless we set ourselves to remedy the evil. It may be replied to me, that a time of war is the last of all seasons when it can be expected that men should subscribe to build churches, or endow ministries: but let me just put this fact before you. If only the sum which in spite of, and over and above the burdens of the war, will be spent during the approaching season in this city on purely vain and unjustifiable display,—in mere pomp and vanity, which will pass away like froth, and leave not a trace behind,—if that sum, or any thing like that sum, were put by for this great and holy purpose,—the whole deficiency would be supplied, at once, effectually, and for ever, as far as our present population is concerned. Shall we enter the war in this spirit? O I fear not. It is easy to come and humble ourselves here,—it costs us nothing: but we love our pleasures too well, we love the praise of men too well, we love

God too little, even to surrender one season's sumptuous living for His service, to shew practically our penitent sense of our offences against Him.

Prayer then, and humiliation, are the great duties more especially belonging to our Christian life at this crisis; and I may add to these, active and special benevolence: active, for our own sakes as well as that of others, that our hearts may be kept open in the midst of so much that tends to close them, our hands employed in good works and labours of love: and special, because many objects will be brought before us by the calamities of the time, calling for more than ordinary succour.

But we are not Christians in any sense of the word, which excludes our being patriots also. We rejoice in and love our country; and now is the time to justify our pride in her, and to give proof of our love. Now, above all times, should party bitterness be laid aside.—Now should our citizens be ashamed of mere craving for personal distinction at the expense of those who already possess it—and hush all unworthy cavils at the conduct of those, who have been entrusted with the arduous duty of conducting the nation through her trying time of exertion and suffering. While we claim our privilege which God's providence has bestowed on us, of watching, and requiring in due time an account of their stewardship, let all of us in the mean

while give them that hearty and generous support which is above all things likely under God to crown their measures with success. And this, though considerable sacrifices may be required of us. It would be indeed poor patriotism, to cheer on the battalions which are sent forth to the war,—and then, when personal exertion is required of us for their sustenance and efficiency, to shrink as cowards from the demand.

And we must be patriots in attitude of mind, as well as in our conduct. We must be prepared to love and stand by our country's champions, in those reverses which are possible, as well as in those successes for which we all hope. It may be, that their despatches may be ever crowned with laurel; but should the cypress prevail, it will not be for us to murmur, but to condole and cheer; not to renounce hope, but to inspire hope; nay if need be, which may God in His mercy avert,—to go forth, as did the Romans of old, to the general returning from defeat, and thank him that he did not despair of the commonwealth. For all this let us be prepared; for none can say, ere a few short years have past, into what depths of suffering we may be summoned to descend, or with what height of success God may be pleased to crown our arms. Let us be found waiting His will, not depressed by reverses, nor unduly elated by victory;—but holding fast by the Lord our God, and humbling

ourselves under His mighty hand, that He may exalt us in due time.

Finally, there is one present duty, to which our attention is called by general consent to-day. It is that of making some provision for the wives and families of our soldiers, who have been ordered to the war. I could wish that this duty were presented to us in a simpler form, and one easier to lay before you *as a duty*. I can only now rest it on the matter of fact—that by want of proper provision for the soldier, there are hundreds of poor wives and children left, as our communication on that subject expresses it, “outcasts on account of this war.” For them your contributions are asked; and I trust, and know, that they will be freely and generously given. So far my duty and yours is clear. “Whoso seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” But I must feel that a Christian minister stands in a far higher position, than that he should be compelled to appear, in making an appeal of this kind, as an advocate of the system which has rendered it necessary. Of that system no document could pronounce a stronger or plainer condemnation, than the letter to the clergy from which I have just quoted. In it we are told, that the soldier’s pay is wholly inadequate to support a family, or even himself, in time of peace, and that that

family are at once pauperized on the breaking out of war. If this be so, the only feeling it can raise in the bosoms of men and Christians, is that of indignation, as simply disgraceful to a civilized and Christian land. And I do trust, while we and our congregations cheerfully accept the duty of helping those who as matter of fact are now left destitute, that no such appeal will for shame ever be made again, nor private charity invited to uphold a great and wealthy nation in a course of heartless and iniquitous parsimony; but that the evil will now at this crisis be immediately and summarily dealt with by the legislature. For of all the burdens which Christians and patriots will cheerfully bear, none will be more gladly submitted to, than that which shall afford to those who offer their lives for their country the power, which every other class of men possesses, that of keeping by their labour those who are naturally dependent on them. Meantime, let us not, because we have done wrong in necessitating this appeal, do worse wrong by refusing it. The fault rests with the nation. Let the nation this day repair the consequences of her fault, and as she is about to do much for the cause of justice in the wide world, begin her work by removing injustice at home.

SERMON XVIII.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1854.

JOHN xi. 25, 26.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this ?”

IF we were called on to select one scene in our Saviour's ministry which more than others combined the wonderful elements of his divine and human character, that scene would unquestionably be the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. Here, the sympathies of His Manhood were most plainly manifested. Here too his testimony to Himself as the fountain and centre of all life was most broadly and openly given. On the one hand, the rising tears stopped his utterance as He approached the grave of his friend ; on the other, He lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I knew that thou hearest me always.” We are apt to associate weakness with the

expression of sorrow ; but let it never be forgotten that His countenance was still wet with tears, who spoke the words of power, " Lazarus, come forth." Never had such a command been uttered, since man had been on earth. Once in the beginning the same voice had said, " Let there be light ; and there was light." The hour was come, when those who were in their graves heard the word of the Son of God, and lived. Yes, brethren, He is the Resurrection and the Life in this primary and lower sense,—that He has the life of man in His hand ; when He pleases, He bestows it, and when He pleases, withdraws. The dead man heard that voice. Far away perhaps in the abode of the departed, the spirit of Lazarus obeyed the call. Again the broken thread of life was knit up ; again the flaccid muscles regained their tension, the glazed eye was lit with meaning, the marvellous processes of respiration and sustenance were revived ; and all at that one word. That one word—of whom ? Shall we say, of Him who made the heavens and the earth, who is the Lord and giver of life ? This might be enough ; but there is more here. For, why are those tears ? why this groaning in spirit ? why this prayer to the Father ? Are they for nothing ? Are they merely for us who come after, that we might see and admire the compassion of our tender High Priest ? Not only so : they bore their part in this great act of love and of power.

The voice which Lazarus heard, and lived, was not only the voice of his Maker, but the voice of his *Redeemer*; not only the voice of God, but the voice of *man*. It was the Head calling to the members,—the voice of humanity penetrating our common nature. As the babe knows the call of the mother, and runs to her arms with joy, so the servant of the Lord, the friend of Jesus, knew His call, and lived. Human love and divine power were mingled in it. It was the voice of Him who was the Resurrection,—even then by anticipation the first born from the dead,—the first fruits of the new and glorious nature of man. It was the voice of Him who is the Life,—who has brought life and immortality to light; who has conquered death and the tomb, and gone up into glory in our nature, that we might follow after in His due time. Thus was our Lord the Resurrection and the Life;—and when He spoke these words to the sorrowing sister of Lazarus, we may well conceive that in their primary meaning they carried this with them,—that He summed in Himself the power over life and death,—had, as the Son of God, the keys of death and the grave, and could summon from either, any whom it might please Him. And O dear friends, even in this lower sense, what an unspeakable comfort it is to us all to know, that He is the Resurrection and the Life. When some beloved one is taken possession of by

death, and the eye in whose light we had rejoiced is closed in the grave, and the voice silent which penetrated us with joy,—what comfort it is to think, that the same tender and compassionate Jesus who wept over the grave of Lazarus, the same powerful Son of God and man who called Lazarus from the tomb, holds our dear friend in His hand, only waiting His pleasure; that death is not the last thing, nor has in any sense the victory,—but that He is the Resurrection and the life. When we look forward on our own future lot, and see before us all uncertain but one thing, and that one thing the same for all,—the inevitable hour—a few days, and we shall go the way whence we shall not return,—O what unspeakable comfort again, to know that He who called Lazarus from the dead, is to us the Resurrection and the life; that the valley is not dark, but lighted by His presence; that though worms consume this body, yet in our flesh shall we see God.

But this is not all, no, nor half of the blessed meaning which these words of our Lord bear with them. Thus much Martha seems already to have known,—that her brother should rise again at the Resurrection in the last day. She did not sorrow altogether as one without hope. Her faith was fixed on the great hope of God's people of which the Psalmist had sung, the fulness of joy in His presence, and the pleasures for evermore at His right hand. But Jesus told

her far more than this. She may very probably have already regarded Him as the *giver* of the resurrection-life; for she could say, "I believe that Thou art the Christ—the Son of the living God." But He told her more again than this. He did not merely say, "I *bring* the resurrection and the life," but "I *AM* the resurrection and the life." He identified himself with both these: He asserted not only that the resurrection-life was *by* Him, but that the resurrection-life was *IN* Him, as its fountain and its spring,—its element and its condition of being. And this it is, by virtue of His being the accepted Head of our humanity, the first-born from the dead, the One who stands before the Father for and on behalf of us. Because He lives (as we had it last Sunday), we shall live also;—deriving not only our permission to live, but our very act of living, our life itself, from His life.

Now in some sense this is true of our *natural* life;—of the natural life of all men, and in fact of the world and of all that therein is. It is Christ's finished work alone, by which this world exists before God. "By Him," says the Apostle, "all things consist¹." It is He alone who has rendered possible the continuance, before Him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, of a sinful and rebellious world. He atoned for the world's sin. In Him was life,

¹ Col. i. 17.

and the life was the light of men. In Him the true light, which lighteth every man, came into the world. In this wide sense then again, He is the life—in Him we live and move and have our being.

But our text manifestly goes very much further than this. For what say the words that follow? “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Here is something far beyond the mere general lot of man, or of man’s world: here is a conscious act of man’s spirit spoken of as the condition of life with Christ,—and that state asserted to place a man superior to death and all its power. And this conscious act of man’s spirit is FAITH; BELIEVING ON HIM. This expression, “believeth on me,” is one of much depth of meaning. It is quite distinguished from “believing me” merely; I may believe a fellow man, but I never can BELIEVE ON a fellow man. There is involved in the expression, receiving, and resting on, Christ: believing what Christ says, but so believing it as to cast a man’s whole being, and energies, and sympathies, and hopes, on and into Christ and His words: so receiving Him, as to live on Him, and to wait on Him, and to hope on Him, and to look for Him, and to have Him for the soul’s centre, and the chief desire and object in life. Now to those who thus receive Christ,

He is, in a manner far above any yet considered, the Resurrection and the life. Notice His words, to the full and blessed sense of which we now come, having risen up through the lower and more general senses. "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Do you not see, how in these words the mere act and state of physical death is counted as nothing, in comparison with the glorious life which He contains in Himself, and communicates to all who are joined to Him by faith? "Though he were dead"—though he have perchance been subjected to physical death, as Lazarus then was, lying in his tomb with his disembodied spirit waiting the great day,—“yet shall he live;” death shall have no dominion over him; he is joined to Me, who am Life; and as it is impossible I should be holden of death, so it is impossible he should be holden of death—he shall live in Me. "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die:" *i. e.* they who believe on Me here on earth, in them is begun a glorious life, which, though they must pass through natural death by the common sentence of all flesh, shall not by that be interrupted nor brought to an end, but shall continue through and in spite of that natural death, so that they shall never die but live for ever. And this life is Christ: not merely depends on Christ, or is derived from

Christ,—but He is this Life Himself, living through and working in all His, in this victorious and eternal manner.

And now, brethren, what kind of life is this of which these glorious words are spoken? Is it the life of the body? Doubtless it is. These frames, so fearfully and wonderfully made, shall not perish. They shall moulder away into dust—but God shall build them up again; and, freed from sin and sorrow and pain, they shall live for ever. Is it the life of the mental faculties, the judgments, the feelings, the affections? Doubtless it is. All these, so wonderful, so lovely even under this their budding time of blight and peril, shall be raised and glorified at His coming, and shall bloom and bear fruit for ever in the uses of a higher state in His presence. But above all, this life here spoken of is the life of the Spirit. The life of the body the natural man lives; the life of the mind and affections the worldly man lives; but the life of the Spirit no man lives, but they who have been born again by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God working in them through faith in Christ. To this life the mere natural man is a stranger, the mere worldly man is a stranger, the mere professed Christian is a stranger. It is not a life of mere outward regularity—though it is outwardly regular, and anxious to avoid every appearance of evil; it is not a life of mere observance of religious duties,

—though it is observant of all such duties; no, its life spring is within, secret in the depths of the heart, and flowing out upon the life, upon all words and acts; sanctifying wholly body, soul, and spirit to the glory of God. Now of such an one it is eminently true, that he lives in Christ, and Christ in him. His element is Christ. “The life which I live in the flesh,” said St. Paul, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me².” And Christ dwells in him. “Abide in me,” He commands us, “and I in you; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing³.”

Now brethren, when the spirit of a man is thus knit to Christ by personal faith, abiding in Christ and Christ in him, dwelt in by the blessed Spirit of holiness, renewed after the divine image, what is death to him? Suppose he HAVE DIED. Think of any dear friend departed in this union with Christ; what is death to him? Can it sever the holy happy spirit from Him who is its life? No—death has no such power. The conditions of the life of the Spirit were not in any way bound to mortality. Not one of them was buried with the body in the grave. No—“he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;”—live now, a blessed spirit in the presence of the

² Gal. ii. 20.

³ John xv. 4, 5.

Lord; and live then, when He shall come, a glorious perfect being,—perfect in his spiritual life, and joined to the resurrection-body,—the crown and completeness of God's creation,—like Him, and enjoying Him for ever.

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in him, shall never die.” ‘WHOSOEVER:’ the word seems to have been purposely chosen, to set forth to us the universal and complete triumph over physical death which the spiritual life achieves. It might perhaps be easy for the young and strong to triumph over death in prospect, by faith in Christ; but they whose days are coming to an end, whose shadow has turned on the dial, before whom the dying bed begins to look real, and who wake and think of their graves, it would be difficult to persuade them that faith in Christ shall carry them over death, had not our Lord thus generalized His words. But it is “WHOSOEVER liveth and believeth in me.” He shall never die. No, beloved, it is not worthy of the name of death, that temporary severance of soul and body which must pass on us all, that brief parting and speedy return, that going to Him who is preparing the many mansions, and returning with Him to fetch our friends who yet linger here. It is not worthy of the name of death. For death is a dreary dismal word, a destruction, a breaking up, a desolation. And what is there dreary in the departure of Christ's faithful ones? What

is there destroyed? The body is but laid aside to be purified, not destroyed. What is there broken up? Perhaps a family on earth, long joined by mutual love; happy greetings are silent awhile, and the home once dear has ceased to be. But shall the traveller, at the end of his journey, mourn for the tent which had sheltered him in the wilderness, and for the voices of his companions by the way?—What desolation is made? None, but to those who yet remain, to toil and press onwards with one friend and helper the less, till their own work is done, and they too received into the rest of their Lord.

Such, beloved, is the quickening power, the resurrection-life inherent in our risen Saviour, and imparted to all who believe in Him, so that though dead they shall live; and even though subject to what men call death, they shall never die.

And now the last solemn words of our text press home these glorious truths to every one's heart, and every one's life. BELIEVEST THOU THIS?

O my friend, to whomsoever I am speaking, whether rich or poor, looked up to in the world or looked down on, living in ease, or living in hardship,—my brother or my sister now listening to me,—you never were asked a question which could compare in importance with this; never one, the answer to which must

come from so deep a place in your hearts, if it be a true answer. BELIEVEST THOU THIS? Thou art a dying creature. Thine immortal spirit is hovering between time and eternity. Here is life; here only. Here is He who is life: who is the resurrection unto life. Hast thou found Him? Nay, put me not off with vain replies. I know thou art here in His house; I know thou hast His book; I know thou comest to His table: but His house, and His book, and His table, are not Himself. His house is not the resurrection and the life; His book is not the resurrection and the life; His table is not the resurrection and the life; but HE HIMSELF, and He alone: and I ask, Hast thou found Him? Here in His house, hast thou found Him? Is it to seek Him that thou comest here, or only because the world, or thy conscience demands it of thee? In His book, dost thou find Him? At His table, dost thou find Him? and above all, in thy soul, in thine inner thoughts and purposes and desires, hast thou learned to believe on Him,—to come to Him in earnest prayer, not word-prayer only, but heart-prayer—the life-throbbing of the yearning heart—to be washed from thy sins, to be renewed by His Spirit, to be made holy and like Him? O press these questions home to your own bosoms this Easter, with a real earnest view to become true believers on Christ. I know that some of you, about to

embark in the gaieties of the world of fashion, living in the world and being of the world, will inwardly ridicule, and it may be outwardly too, the idea of your becoming truly and heartily believers on Christ. I perfectly well know, that you come here to listen to sermons, and to criticise, and give your opinion on sermons—and that the last thing which occurs to some is to *live by* what they hear. But O beloved friends, let me earnestly and affectionately remind you, that God's ministers are not set here for this—but are sent to win men to Christ, to gain saints for heaven, to save sinners from destruction. A few more strokes of the hour, and we shall all be in eternity; you to give an account of your stewardship, and I of mine. What will it matter then to you or to me, whether I pleased you with words and figures of speech, or displeased you by pressing home my messages from God to your hearts? But O it will be of intense import to me, whether I have put Christ before you in all His fulness as your Saviour, and laboured to bring each one of you to Him by exposing your own weakness, your manifold perils and temptations; and it will be of intense import to you, whether you have received this call in the depths of your hearts, and sought for Christ, and found Him.

Go home then this morning, and while the joyous tidings “the Lord is risen” are still sounding about you in the services of the

Church, meditate on Him in your closets as your Resurrection and your Life. Stand with Him by that grave of Lazarus; mark His tears of human sorrow: listen to His voice of divine power. Learn to love Him above all that you love besides: learn to trust in Him for time and for eternity. He will, and He can.

One word more, and it is a solemn one. When each whom I now see before me has been summoned out of the body, it will be with *this saying of our Lord* that our surviving friends will be met, as they bear the empty tabernacle to the house appointed for us all. O may no bitter memories of us cast a blight in their minds over the blessed assurances which these words contain,—no dreary misgivings of our part in them; but when they hear “he that believeth on me, though he were dead yet shall he live,”—may our holy lives and happy deaths come like fragrance on their memories, and their tears of mourning be mingled with tears of joy.

SERMON XIX.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1854.

FOR THE IRISH CHURCH MISSIONS TO THE
ROMAN CATHOLICS.

ISA. XLIV. 20.

“ He feedeth on ashes : a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand ? ”

THESE words occur in a very remarkable passage, wherein the prophet Isaiah points out the everlasting mercies of the one covenant God of Israel, and depicts with indignant scorn the contemptible course of the worshippers of idols. He exposes their utter folly and infatuation, in making brute material, part of which they have already turned to common uses, to be the god which they worship : in saying to the stock of a tree, “ Deliver me : for thou art my god.” Such was the degradation of mind, the want of knowledge and understanding, among the heathen of old. And, which may seem wonderful

to us, God's chosen people, whom He had delivered by a mighty hand and outstretched arm, dwelling in the midst of these nations, were again and again led into their ways, and seduced from the Lord their God to worship idols. For this sin, God repeatedly punished them, and at last suffered them to be carried away captive to Babylon. By the discipline of that captivity, the remnant of Judah became comparatively purged from idolatry. We do not hear of its drawing them away again, after their return to the land of promise: nay when Antiochus Epiphanes attempted to force idolatrous observances on them, they made a noble resistance under their Maccabæan leaders, and asserted the worship of the true God.

But it must not be imagined, that because paganism was thus once vanquished, it lost its power from that time. Another and a fiercer struggle was at hand. The Son of God was ere long manifested in man's nature, to free him alike from the preparatory bondage of the law, and from the gross degradation of heathenism. To the rejection of Him by his own people, his death on the cross was owing: and in the mighty conflict with the principle of idolatry, his mystical Body the Church has well-nigh fallen a sacrifice. It is customary, I know, to limit the struggle with paganism to the first three centuries, and to see in the conversion of Constantine, and the establishment of Christianity as the reli-

gion of the empire, the ultimate triumph of the Gospel. I cannot acquiesce in such a view. I look on the struggle with paganism as not completed, but only compromised, by the adoption of Christianity as the imperial religion. It is true, Christianity was adopted, in a sense: but what sort of Christianity? There was indeed a growing accuracy in doctrinal belief. Imperial councils settled, after this, many important points in accordance with Scripture testimony. But at the same time the germs of that system were expanding, which has in fact merged the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel in the tenets and practices of paganism. So far was idolatry from being overthrown, that from this time she was received into the bosom of the Christian Church. And in the hybrid system which resulted, the mythology of paganism was adopted almost without protest, as a part of Gospel tradition. The Queen of heaven, with her sacred month, and her floral offerings,—the twelve greater gods of heathendom, and the innumerable lesser ones, heroes and demi-gods,—these all remained, strangely represented by the meek maiden of Nazareth, the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, and the noble army of saints and martyrs for Christ. At Rome itself, the names were hardly changed. Its heathen title of Pontifex Maximus remained, and remains to this day, conspicuous in many a papal inscription. Its priests, and sacred virgins, and in-

cense, and altars, and votive offerings, and saturnalia, and a hundred other observances of paganism, endured, and still endure. Temples of heathen deities passed into churches of Christian saints, with hardly any innovations which could shock the ancient worshippers. The sacred aspersion with consecrated water, denounced by the primitive Christian fathers as heathenish, was retained: the offering and burning of lamps and candles, justly ridiculed by early Christian writers as a part of the follies of heathenism, continued: before similar, or in some cases the very same images as before, as gorgeously dressed with votive robes, the multitudes still prostrated themselves. The Pantheon bears to this day the inscription, that having been once dedicated by its builder Agrippa to Jove and all the gods, it was by the Pontifex Boniface IV. re-dedicated to the mother of God and all the saints: and so of many others. And let it not for a moment be supposed, that Christianity could maintain its purity in such an association, or its own principle under such a compromise. It was the very nature of the system, as one of its modern champions has informed us, to develope itself: and as with the seed sown among thorns, so here; the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. Our prophet asks, a few verses before our text, “Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is *profitable for nothing?*”

This was the very principle of paganism. By the ignorance of the people, the priest existed; their offerings aggrandized the temple, and the temple's guardians. And so it was here. Wealth and power became the great objects of ambition in the Christian Church. Rome, shorn of her imperial pre-eminence, gradually substituted for it an ecclesiastical pre-eminence, of which the first ages never heard nor dreamed. St. Peter, the first stone on whom the Church begun to be built at Jerusalem, was, by one of the boldest strokes of legendary invention, brought to Rome and made its bishop, and its subsequent bishops reputed his successors. Very gradually their assumptions grew. They became vicars of Christ on earth,—setters up and putters down of kings; they decreed doctrines and ordinances: changed the word of God, and when even after their own rendering of it its testimony was too direct against them, shut it up altogether from the people.

Meantime, other and equally great abuses had been growing up under the shadow of the papacy. The heathen priesthood, I said, insensibly glided into the Christian priesthood. A *priest* must have somewhat to *offer*. But Christ's sacrifice had made an end of victims. This was too palpable to be denied. The priest could offer nothing else except Christ; but Christ had been already offered once for all. But what if some way could be devised, by which Christ's

offering might be feigned to be repeated from time to time? Then would the priest have what to sacrifice ; and the priestly system might be upheld. And so the doctrine of the MASS, —*i. e.* that the priest offers up Christ,—was brought in, with its monstrous accompaniment of transubstantiation ; and by these, and absolution, and the isolation by celibacy of the priestly order, their power grew and was consolidated. They became lords of men's consciences, by the practice of auricular confession. This gave them access to the secrets of families and of political intrigue. By all kinds of ecclesiastical and monastic combination, the system was extended and cemented. Mankind in general were kept in ignorance. The Romish Church was never a friend to light, nor indeed could she be ; for by the entrance of light her existence is measured. The meanest capacity, furnished with the Bible, can detect and expose her fallacies and abuses. This she well knows, and ever has known it ; and she is therefore perfectly consistent when she keeps the Bible from the people.

For the very essence of Christianity is directly opposed to all this which we have been describing. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH ; its appeal is to the individual heart of man, not through any corporation or priesthood, but through his hearing of the word of God, by which cometh faith in the one sacrifice

of the One High Priest; which is to save him, and sanctify him by the indwelling Spirit, the promise of the Father, by the one Mediator, Christ Jesus. So that all this fabric of repeated sacrifice, and human priesthood and absolution, and infallible bishops of Rome, and mediating saints and angels, and grace derived by a succession from the Apostles, falls to the ground at once; and this, blessed be God, the unlearned and the child can see written in letters of light on the page of their Bibles; and therefore Bibles are kept from them, lest they should see this, and live.

This system reached its height in the beginning of the sixteenth century after Christ. It was God's will at that time to pour out His Spirit in a remarkable manner on His Church. And He made use of secondary causes to serve His high purpose. The invention of printing not long before this had made it impossible to confine knowledge of the Scriptures any longer to a few persons. Up and down the world, many had pored over the pages of the Bible, and become ready for the Reformation, before Luther appeared. At this time also, the moral and spiritual abuses of Rome cried aloud for interference. The scandalous lives of her priesthood,—the irregularities of her monastic orders,—the open traffic in permission to sin by the sale of indulgences, all these raised men's indignation to such a point, that they were prepared on the first signal to join the ranks of the

reformers. I need not follow the history of that eventful period,—that time of man's weakness and God's strength; of the overruling of the lusts and tyranny of princes for God's purposes; of His making the wrath of man to praise Him. I need only point to the results of the Reformation, as recorded in history, and seen in our own days. And though there is no ground for boasting, but much for sadness and humiliation in such a survey, when we consider what has been and is, and compare it with what ought to be; yet all this is manifestly owing to our own and our fathers' delinquencies, not to any defect in the principles then acknowledged and then working, so far as they have been allowed to work. And herein lies one of the most striking differences between the Romish and the Reformed Churches. Our abuses are but excrescences on our system; their abuses are the essentials of their system. Remove our abuses,—our work becomes easier, and our object is brought nearer; remove theirs,—their work is utterly at an end, and their object for ever lost.

The grand principle of the Reformation was the enfranchisement of the individual conscience; the recognition of the fundamental truth, that each of us is put in trust by God with himself, his immortal spirit, and responsible directly to God. From this principle flow forth in direct sequence many others, which by degrees have established themselves in Protestant countries,

where not repressed and kept under. From this immediately follows every man's right to search God's word for himself,—to have access to the Father by the Son and through the Spirit, without the intervention of human priest, or saintly mediator. This principle is the seed of all diffusion of knowledge,—of all recognition of the duty of educating the people,—of all personal and civil freedom,—of all liberty of conscience. Gradually, in this our favoured land, these mighty results have been making their way. We have become a pattern to the nations in the expansion and success of our political institutions, just in so far as we have consistently followed out the principles admitted at our Reformation. And we shall continue the centre of the light of freedom and knowledge, the refuge of the oppressed, the dread and envy of the nations, in proportion as we remain faithful to these principles,—as we are the distributors of the word of God, the upholders of general and efficient education, the assertors of the liberty of the persons and consciences of men.

Meanwhile, however, the antagonistic system has by no means been put down, nor shorn of its power and resources. Nor was it to be expected. For it is the master-weapon of the prince of this world in his contest with the Gospel. It enables him not merely to deceive the nations with lies, which he has done from the first; but to turn that Gospel itself into a

lie,—to bind the word of God,—and make it speak his will. He has not tamely surrendered this master-piece of his skill and subtlety. Nay the first effects of the Reformation were, the strengthening of his position and further development of his system. An army of his agents was poured out upon the world, differing in its composition and duties from any confederation which the world had before seen. Proclaiming the principle that the end to be attained justified the means employed, these devotees went forth, in all garbs and in all societies, with the one object of advancing the Papacy, and retrieving the ground which had been lost. Subtle, impregnable, and ubiquitous, this combination has more than once proved too strong even for the Papacy itself; but it has unquestionably been its most efficient and dangerous agent in checking the spread of the principles of the Reformation. Some of the fairest portions of Europe and the world are in consequence still held captive under its sway; strangers to the Holy Scriptures, and the truth as it is in Jesus,—strangers to the liberty of person and of conscience, and to every real and worthy advancement of man. In some countries, the system has had its full sway, from its co-existing with absolute and irresponsible government. And there its real tendencies have been developed without check. There the traveller finds sanctioned by the Romish Church prac-

tices of undisguised idolatry and grovelling superstition, which he could not otherwise have credited, and which her wary advocates in enlightened lands and societies do not scruple to disavow. In these latter, another course is pursued. A show of liberality is put forward, and education appears to be encouraged. The grosser superstitions are checked or kept in the background, and gradually avowed, as found expedient. The principle of liberty of conscience is artfully asserted, and employed to prove the right to subvert that liberty. No pains are spared to gain proselytes. Families are undermined, and the young and pliant and half-informed made victims, and so the attempt is made to sow the seed of further increase in another generation. Providentially, by an ill-advised step in advance, grounded on exaggerated views of their prospects here, they have opened the eyes of English Protestants to their designs, and united us as one man to counteract and repel them; and the recent results of the census, though they should not for a moment slacken our watchfulness, or give us a less idea of their activity, are yet causes of thankfulness, to see that their success has been hitherto so limited.

In Ireland, however, where their numbers predominate, their course has been far different. There the whole history of popery has been that of blight and degradation, of subjugation of the

conscience and oppression,—of disaffection and murder. Perhaps in no country upon earth has the influence of the Church of Rome been exhibited in such dark colours; in no country has priestly dominion been so fearlessly asserted and put in force. Secure to be judged only by just and merciful laws, the priests have gone to every length which the letter of those laws allowed them. They have denounced from their altars the opponents of their system; with what results it is needless for me to describe. It may be doubted whether any where, or at any period, the power of the priesthood over the people has been so complete as it was in Ireland previously to the year 1846.

In that year of famine and distress, the alienation of the minds of many of their followers seems to have begun. They had for some time had partial preparations for the duty of thinking for themselves. Political agitation, and the temperance movement, originated, remarkably enough, by a Roman Catholic priest¹, had accustomed them in some measure to be put in trust with their own opinions and resolves; and the utter failure of the priests in checking the potato blight by miraculous means, shook their confidence in them, and prepared the way for the movement which fol-

¹ I must not be understood, in thus speaking, to commit myself to the principle of this movement, but simply to dwell on one of its results, as matter of fact. See above, p. 196.

lowed. Add to this, that the access which the Protestant clergy gained to the sick and needy, during the pestilence and famine, brought them into acquaintance with persons and families inaccessible before.

The first regular plan for diffusing Christian knowledge among them was adopted by one of the present Secretaries of the Irish Church Mission Society in 1845 and 1846, by transmitting very extensively, through the penny-post, plain and pointed tracts on the right and duty of reading the Scriptures; accompanied by a few emissaries to watch the reception and progress of the tracts. Thus the most favourable positions for the work were ascertained; and we read in the Society's statement, that soon such tokens of success were granted as to make it necessary to give publicity to the movement about to be made, by constituting a Society. I need not follow the various endeavours which have been now consolidated in the Society for Irish Church Missions; it will be far more edifying and interesting to you to put you in possession of the extent and importance of the movement which I am to call on you this day to aid with all your power. The aim and object of the Society has been well characterized thus: "It is the very first machinery set in motion since the Reformation, which openly professes to carry the Gospel, as such, to the Romanists, as those who have it

not." I may very generally and briefly say, that this machinery consists of ordained missionaries, appointed to districts containing large Roman Catholic populations, at the request of the Protestant incumbents; or for whole dioceses, at the request of the bishop; of lecturers and preachers on the controversy between Roman Catholics and Protestants; of lay agents and readers; of schoolmasters and mistresses for training children in the Protestant faith of the United Church. It also proposes to itself generally to adopt any measures that may tend to the conversion of the Roman Catholic population of Ireland by means consistent with the principles of the United Church; and to maintain friendly communication with all Church of England Societies seeking the spiritual welfare of Ireland.

The progressive numbers of the Society's agents testifies, as indeed does every thing in its history and statistics, to the rich measure of the divine blessing which has accompanied it from the first. In 1849, their whole number was 95; in 1850, 141; in 1851, 226; in 1852, 334; and at the present time, it is 582. I could not venture here to recount to you any thing at all fairly representing the continually enlarging works of breaking up new ground, and efficiently occupying ground already tilled, in which the Society has been engaged. For all such details, I would refer you to its Re-

ports and occasional papers; and confine myself to a few general statements, which may give those of you who are unacquainted with the facts, some idea of the extent of this most unexampled and wonderful movement².

* * * * *

I believe I have now said enough to justify my having placed the Society for Irish Church Missions in the forefront of my subjects of appeal in this the first year of my ministry among you. It is my wish to have our charity collections rather few and effective than very frequent; and if the course of our ordinary teaching must be sometimes interrupted by them, to let it be interrupted by that which may really prove an accession to it. And here is a society which eminently fulfils this condition. It constitutes the Church of England's most successful, indeed her first organized carrying out of her own Reformation principles. It has been blest with such a measure of undoubted success, of permanent Christian usefulness, that I can safely ask the most sober and least enthusiastic among you to look calmly on its career and say whether you do not recognize, as members of Christ's Church, a

² The facts which were here quoted in the sermon, and many more, of equal interest, will be found in a "Sketch of the origin and operations of the Society," by the Rev. Wm. Marrable, A.M., Secretary: published at the Society's office, Marlborough Chambers, 49, Pall Mall.

strong call of duty to aid its onward progress. And I own I have another motive in responding promptly to the call of this Society to preach for them. In our days, the trumpet must not give an uncertain sound. We have, I hope and trust, much work to do together; many lines of Christian teaching to follow out, much Scripture to go patiently through in our afternoon expositions,—besides the practical work of our district,—the carrying of the Gospel to our poor, and bringing our poor here to the Gospel. And it is most important that all these should be carried on in a spirit of mutual confidence; that it should be clearly understood on what principles our work proceeds, that all may give to it their best energies without let or hindrance. We cannot afford time for mutual misunderstandings. The sower soweth the word, and it should be plain that the word sown, and to be sown, here, is the pure word of God,—the glad tidings of life by Christ announced to every man, as He has commanded us; and that there is and will be no admixture in it of doctrines of man's invention. It is most important in these times, that we should take no wavering and uncertain course, but be known in all our acts and endeavours, as a congregation of Protestant Christians, loving their Bibles, and toiling to make others love them also; as a congregation who will not tolerate, in outward rites, or in spoken words,

any approach to that corrupt Church, from which God in His mercy has delivered us ; who while they shun all exaggerated statements and uncharitable judgments of others, will yet be eager to strive for the truth, and ever ready to speak and act plainly on its behalf.

The call which has already within these last few days been made on your liberality³, was unexpected when the arrangements for this sermon were closed ;—and I hope therefore that it will be considered, as indeed it was, a thing of itself, not a portion of our ordinary course of collections.

And yet in one respect, I would have it a portion of our ordinary course : viz. as an example which we may act up to in future. As God enabled us on that solemn occasion to be among the foremost, so may we always be in every good work. May each of our hearts be full of the love of Christ as our own Saviour, full of desire to win others to Him, full of compassion and tender mercy : so that whether the call be to relieve distress, or to spread the Redeemer's kingdom at home and abroad, we may ever be a ready, united, earnest people—fervent in spirit, serving the Lord—humble instruments in His hand for the good of mankind, and for His glory.

³ On the day of general humiliation for the war, April 26. See Sermon XVII.

SERMON XX.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1854.

JOHN xxi. 17.

“Peter was grieved, because Jesus said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”

A PECULIAR interest attaches to the period between our Lord's Resurrection and His Ascension. Before His death, wonderful as it was that the Son of God should be manifested in the flesh of man, we lose sight of the wonder, and become accustomed to His human words and acts. It is the presence of the Godhead, which appears to us strange and exceptional during His humiliation. His divine utterances, and exertions of power, seem almost like a protest against the infirmities and sorrows of His humanity. But how all has changed, as soon as He has passed through the grave and gate of death. Now, it is the human element for which

we look with such intense interest. We expect Him to be superhuman—to be awful in presence, sublime in discourse. Death, and all of which death is the result, have no more any thing in Him. The man of sorrows has ceased to grieve: the forsaken of God is accepted: the crucified One is triumphant and glorious. At this time then, His human utterances are inexpressibly affecting. When the humbled and afflicted Jesus sought for sympathy from His chosen ones,—“Stay ye here and watch with me,”—we hardly felt as if we heard any thing unusual: but when the risen and glorified Jesus seeks for assurance of human affection, we are stirred almost to tears. It seems to take the humble wayside flowers of our earth and plant them in the paradise of God,—to sanctify our friendships and exalt our sympathies,—when we find them no unworthy companions for the joys and glories of the Redeemer’s triumph.

Let us turn from the Master to his disciples. What a strange time it must have been for them—what a time of expanding hopes, and prospects vast and uncertain. How the past was now lighted up with glorious remembrances—how words long forgotten and little understood came forth one after another into meaning—how each parable put on fresh beauty, each miracle fresh wonders of mercy. The cross, a few short weeks since, what was it? The defeat of all their hopes, the darkest spot

in all their memories ; the lowest deep of abasement in their Master's life of disappointment and failure. But O what is it now? Not hope's defeat, but its ground: no longer their shame, but their glory; the brightest proof of divine love,—the perfection of their Lord's obedience. How full were their hearts of these thoughts,—not yet distinct, not yet grouped into their several places, nor assigned their doctrinal results in the spirit and destinies of men, but crowding one on another, each almost too vast for human feelings to sustain. And at the same time, how variously must each Apostle's own previous character, and words, and acts, have been interwoven into this tangled web of memories of the past. Something of grief, something of self-reproach, must have mingled in the thoughts of all. For they had all boasted at the approach of His hour of darkness: they all had forsaken Him on its arrival. The exceeding heaviness which weighed on His soul, had pressed yet heavier on it, because they, His own, His chosen friends, left Him alone; slept, when they should have watched with Him; fled, when they should have stood by Him. But if all felt thus, what shall we say of him, who was the first to confess, and the first to deny his Master? Can we suppose that that look, which the buffeted and suffering Jesus turned on him in that hour, had faded from his memory? that he had forgotten those bitter

tears which he shed in his repentance on that eventful night? We may discern especial tenderness towards him in our Lord's words and acts after the resurrection. He might well have imagined, that that bright dawn of joy to the rest, was to be no morning to him: he who had so basely and so repeatedly denied Jesus, could he with any likelihood expect that Jesus would acknowledge him in His glory? Had he not heard from his Master's own lips, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny?" With these thoughts, how would his heart bound with recovered hope at the first words of the Lord to the women at the sepulchre, "Go your way, tell his disciples, *and Peter*, that He goeth before you into Galilee." But again, others had *seen Him* that morning. Will He shew Himself to His fallen Apostle? One traitor had miserably perished: why should the other escape and be honoured? The denial in words, what was it but a betrayal? Should he, though named among the disciples, ever see his Lord again till he should behold Him in judgment? If such forebodings were in Peter's mind, Jesus met and removed them all. Not only were comforting words sent to him, but he was honoured as the first of the Apostles to whom Christ appeared, as the first undoubted messenger of the glad tidings to the rest. The two who had gone to Emmaus, on returning with their strange and joyful tale,

found the eleven assembled and them that were with them, saying "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." So far then for the proof, which is never wanting, that Jesus is very pitiful and of tender mercy. So far for His dealings with the penitent, who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. But we may well conceive, that more than this was wanted: more, for Peter himself: and more for the Church, which as an Apostle he was to guide and teach. For himself, because he might be tempted to think lightly of his sin, if it could be thus lightly passed over: and for the Church which, without some special word from its divine Head, might, in subsequent conflicts of opinion and authority, reject an apostleship, which rested only on surmise and inference, however reasonably founded. This double purpose I conceive to have prompted the questions which our Lord on this occasion put to His Apostle.

The whole circumstances are full of deep and solemn interest. A portion of the apostolic band had returned for a time to their old employment as fishermen on the sea of Galilee. It was our Lord's own announcement, that He would go before them thither: and St. Matthew tells us that the eleven went to a mountain in Galilee where Jesus had appointed them. Here therefore we find them, at some time between the Resurrection and the feast of Pentecost.

All night they had been toiling, and had taken nothing. Just so it was, more than three years before, when Jesus first summoned Peter, James, and John to follow Him. Many things must have served to remind them of that other incident: and doubtless it was so arranged, that they might recall it to mind. For the two had many points of similarity, and also some instructive points of difference. Some of these will come before us as we pass on. After the night of disappointment and toil, when the day dawned, they see a stranger standing on the shore. His first address seemed to them no more than the customary question of some mercantile enquirer, anxious to purchase the fruit of their night's fishing. Nor did they recognize him, when he ordered them to cast their net in a particular spot, and they should find. When however the net became full, and they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes, the disciple whom Jesus loved, ever deepest in knowledge of his Master and readiest to discern Him, said unto Peter, "It is the Lord." All the incidents of that former occasion came full and fresh upon his mind. It was the Lord, acting over again that miracle which first deeply impressed them with His power and their own unworthiness. It was as when some combination of outward circumstances brings before us a long-forgotten scene with all its words and its details—as if time

had gone back, and were beginning from thence again. And here, as at the sepulchre, we have the characters of the two Apostles strikingly illustrated. It was for John to discern: but for the eager and warm-hearted Peter to act. First of the band he cast himself into the sea to meet his Lord. How different from his manner on that other occasion, when he fell at Jesus' knees saying "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Not that he knew his own sinfulness less, but that he loved his Saviour more. His had been that true repentance unto life, which draws a man closer to Christ; not that worldly repentance, which would banish God from the thoughts by way of finding relief.

I need not minutely follow all the subsequent incidents. I would only just ask you to think on the little company seated at their meal on the shore, with the risen Saviour serving among them, giving them bread and fish likewise—and no man venturing to ask Him, "who art thou?" knowing that it was the Lord. How exalted the joy, how deep the reverence which possessed their minds. How God loves the humble and lowly. Not only in the humiliation of Jesus did He move among his disciples as one that served, but in his glory He ministered to the simple band of fishermen on the beach of Gennesaret. But other thoughts rise upon us as we pursue the narrative. The frugal meal

was now over, which was to bear no inconsiderable part in the future testimony to His resurrection: they had eaten and drunk with Him, after He rose from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" "Is it so true, that though all men deny me, thou wilt never deny me? Thou wert eager but just now to meet me with joy. is that eagerness real and hearty?" Observe the exquisitely tender and delicate character of our Lord's question. Call it a reproachful one if you will;—and no doubt there is somewhat of reproach in it: but it is the reproach of one who knows the heart which he is piercing, and chastises in gentleness and love. Not a doubt is cast on the fact of his love; it is simply his former boast which is called in question,—and even that in no spirit of unkindness, but of exceeding affection. 'More than these'—how these words must have gone into the depths of Peter's soul. Yes, he felt that he did love his Lord more than they all. First of the band he had ever confessed Him; first of the band he had come out to Him that memorable night on the dark and stormy sea; he had ever been yearning to follow Him, yea even to prison and to death. But O what a lesson of shame and self-distrust did these words bring:—more than these he felt he loved,—but these had never denied Jesus,—he had;

openly and repeatedly, in a craven moment of cowardice, he had declared with solemn asseverations, "I do not know the man." But it was not the first time that the penitent's heart had been wrung with the remembrance of his unworthiness. He had passed through the first burst of self-condemning anguish, and had learned that important lesson for all true penitents,—that genuine self-abasement leads men to cast themselves more entirely upon God. "He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee;" "My heart is open to thee; it is wretchedly weak, and has lamentably fallen; but Thou knowest that it is not a double heart; love to Thee is its element, its life, its joy." "Jesus saith unto him, Feed my lambs." "Take, by My own appointment, that high office from which thy fall might seem to have deposed thee; be the bringer of many into the fold, the indicator of fresh pastures to my people Israel."

Again the solemn question is repeated, dropping, however, the comparison, so as to make it more directly personal; and, we may well imagine, with that increased earnestness of manner and fixedness of look, with which we utter words whose definite reference we wish to be observed. Doubtless the glow of shame was deeper, and the troubled heart beat more tumultuously, but the same humble answer is returned, and the divine commission renewed,

with this time a slight variation—"Shepherd my sheep;"—"be the instrument of leading and ruling the maturer disciples of my flock in those ways which I shall point out to thee for them to walk in;" a caution not unneeded, if we remember the wavering conduct of this Apostle in the first recognition of Christ's purpose towards the Gentiles in after years.

A third time He saith to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" But we may notice, that whereas on each previous occasion the word which we render "lovest" is the usual one for the love which man bears to God, love mingled with reverence, and Peter's reply has each time employed another word, more commonly used of the love which a man bears to his friend, an equal to his equal, here our Lord drops the more distant term, and adopts Peter's own word of deep and personal affection¹. Our English tongue, poor and coarse in minute distinctions of feeling, has but one word, 'love,' for both; but the difference in the original is very touching and significant. It is this time the closest and most searching enquiry into the yearnings of the heart. "Art thou indeed my friend—am I dear to thee?" Then comes that beautiful touch of nature which our text contains—"Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?" He was grieved, not only that the question was so

¹ Before, it was ἀγαπᾷς με; now, φιλεῖς με.

often repeated, but because this *third* enquiry fell heavy on his conscience. Thrice had he denied, and thrice is he questioned. What indeed was the reproach, compared with the sin? How eager are we to get rid of the memory of our frailties—how intolerant of that, be it ever so much below our real deserts, which reminds us of them. “He said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” “Why shouldest Thou, before whom all hearts are open, any longer probe the weakness of thy servant? My heart, in its feebleness and in its strength, lies bare before thee; thou knowest its most hidden thought, and seest it full of love.” “Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” But here again in the genuine text, we have an affecting difference, hardly to be recognized in our English. It is the diminutive, by which in all tongues, affection is expressed;—the choicest sheep of any flock,—the little ones, whom none must offend². Feed them—minister to them the food of the Spirit—speak and write to them who were as sheep going astray—but are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls³.

Let us just notice, before we pass on, how beautifully these words of our Lord are illustrated by the position and writings of St. Peter. He was the first, in God’s providence, to open

² βόσκει τὰ προβάτιά μου.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 25.

the door of the fold both to Jews, on the day of Pentecost,—and to Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius. And in his epistles he recurs again and again to this pastoral image. “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away⁴.” But let us also notice, how far all this is, as is every thing in Scripture and early Church history, from giving any countenance to the foolish dream of a primacy among the Apostles, by which the Church of Rome, pretending to have been founded by this Apostle, which she was not, seeks to enforce her claims of dominion over the consciences of men. Nothing can be further from the character of the whole narrative—nothing more inconsistent with St. Paul’s sayings regarding him,—nothing more contradictory to his own expressions of his position and feelings. We see in him a warm-hearted and earnest disciple of Christ, full of love for his Master, and no doubt taught self-distrust by his bitter experience. His place

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 1—4.

among the Apostles was ever the most forward while our Lord was on earth: and after the Ascension, he was the foremost and honoured instrument of founding the Jewish and Gentile Church; the first built on of the twelve foundations of the holy city, which are the twelve Apostles of the Lamb; and in this sense, according to the literal, and in my view the only possible meaning of our Lord's promise, the Stone on which the Church was built. But very soon in the apostolic history, his light wanes before the brighter splendour of the great Apostle of the Gentiles; and beyond all question, if we are to ask who was the first of the Apostles, the answer must be St. Paul. That Peter did follow his divine Master to prison and to death, we know from the prophecy following our text. Eventually, though not as he once meant it, he laid down his life for His sake; and proved the genuineness of that love which he here so affectingly asserted.

And now, beloved, we have somewhat to learn from our simple narrative. First, from the words and demeanour of our Lord; and then from those of his Apostle. How tender and considerate He was in all He here said, I have before observed. But let me observe it again, to bring it home to ourselves. We too have to do with Jesus. And we have no reason to feel that He will deal more harshly with us than He did with his penitent disciple. He is

full of compassion. Man may reproach us—load us with bitter words—delight in our anguish;—but Jesus never reproaches, or if He seems to do so, His words are full of love as well as of chastisement. Man may strike wantonly, and strike again when we are down, and follow it up to our ruin; but our Saviour does not so. He wounds only as the physician wounds—that He may heal. His wounds are to question our love; not that He needs to enquire into it, but that we may enquire into it, and prove ourselves, and test the reality of our love for Him. And He *will* come to us with such questions. He is not a friend who will have our love taken as a mere matter of course. O no, brethren;—our love for Him is to be our hold, our dependence, our stay, in uncertainty, in danger, in difficulty; and He will ever have us to be leaning on Him in our dark and rugged path,—will ever be feeling for us and assuring our grasp of Him. Therefore He tries His chosen ones, and comes to them with bereavements and sicknesses, and depression of spirit, and afflicting judgments; all these are His ways of enquiring, “Lovest thou me?” And if they are repeated again and again, why should we murmur at this? We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Such reminders are but the crook of the chief Shepherd, bringing back His sheep that they go not astray.

And from the penitent Apostle too, we may learn. First, his humility. He casts himself simply on his Lord. He knew what a broken reed self was to lean upon. He had once trusted to himself; he had sown in self-confidence, and had reaped tears and shame. And have not we too had some sad experience of the same kind? Have we never gone forth champions, and returned traitors? Have we never spoken as if we would stand for Christ against an army, and then fled at the first sight of a foe? O brethren, let us ever distrust ourselves, and cast ourselves on Christ. Let us not be drawing highly-coloured pictures to ourselves of our devotedness, our faith, our love—exalting ourselves, to be abased; but rather simply renounce all self-esteem and boasting, and fly for our refuge to “Lord, thou knowest.” “Thou knowest my unworthiness:—every denial of Thee, every broken resolution, every secret sin,—I would lay all before Thee, and rest on Thy loving-kindness and tender mercy.” And then learn his simplicity and single-mindedness. “Thou knowest that I love thee.” O happy soul, which can thus lie bare before God’s searching eye and assert its love for Him! And why may not every one of us be thus happy? Dismiss bye ends and double purposes—give up the fruitless and disappointing attempt to serve the world and God at the same time—though in weakness, and in fear, and in

self-abasement, yet in singleness of purpose, cleave to the blessed Jesus; follow Him simply, singly; lay aside every weight and the sin that easily besets you, and run the race,—with His love to urge you onward, His grace to nerve you by the way, His example,—yea more, Himself,—for your object and goal. Thus will His questionings and His chastisements not be in vain, if they knit your hearts to Him. And thus if we have, alas, all of us followed Peter in his denials, shall we also follow him in his affectionate devotion, and inherit the promise made to Him, “Whither I go thou canst not follow me now—but thou shalt follow me hereafter.”

But can I part from the interesting scene which we have been looking on to-day, and forget that we too this morning are to be the guests of our risen Saviour—that He invites us, as He invited His disciples, to come and eat at His table? that we shall sit with Him a short hour on the shore of the troubled sea of life, ministered to by Him? And what though we shall not see Him there with our bodily eyes, nor handle Him, nor feed on Him in any corporeal sense,—may we meet Him there in spirit; may we discern His spiritual presence, while we partake of the symbols of His body and blood; may something of that deep joy and reverence be shed abroad in our hearts, which the Apostles felt, when they knew that

it was the Lord. And amidst the solemn self-questioning which such sense of His presence will raise in us, when we are overpowered with our own waywardness and unworthiness and forgetfulness of Him, may each of our hearts yet burst forth in the warmth and fulness of entire devotion, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

SERMON XXI.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1854.

PSALM lxxvii. 3.

“Let the people praise thee, O God : let all the people praise thee.”

WE read in Scripture of a day, when “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy¹.” This was at the commencement of God’s work of creation. Whether that work consisted in the diffusion of life through a myriad worlds, or in its concentration in one, it was hailed with the glad chorus of the heavenly hosts, and the vast tracts of space rung with their praises. Again, we read of a day when the great multitude which no man can number shall utter their voices as the voice of a great thunder, when there shall be heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and they shall sing a new song

¹ Job xxxviii. 7.

before the throne. And this shall be when God's second creation, the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, shall come forth in beauty from her Maker's hand. So that Time begins, and Time ends with praise. And though during its course there may seem to be many an interval of dreary silence, yet God never wants praise. He inhabiteth the praises of eternity; and even here on earth, praise waiteth for Him among his people. The whole of the course of God's saints is full of praise. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hath He ordained praise. Trouble may darken their path—but He giveth songs in the night. Persecution may scorch them; but they glorify God in the fires. They may be scattered up and down in the world; but from the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. At all times, they praise Him. The day dawns, and the glorious sun comes forth; but not before the servant of God with His praise;—"Awake up my glory, awake lute and harp; I myself will awake right early." All through the day arise the same grateful strains;—"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night: upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery: upon the harp with solemn sound." Again and again

all the powers of heaven and earth are called upon to join in God's high praise. The angels above, the depths beneath; God's works in creation and in providence; all instruments of stop or string; every thing that hath breath; all these are invoked to aid in the work of praising the Lord, of blessing Him, and magnifying Him for ever.

And is there not ample reason? What though sin seem to have marred the Creator's glorious work, is it not a glorious work still? The heavens, with all their wonders of brightness, glorify Him; the earth, with her ten thousand processes of life and organization, is full of His power and wisdom, and love; and man is the noblest proof of all these combined. Granted, that our life is short and full of misery, yet who does not love it? Who does not look backward with fond recollection, however sad the past may have been; who does not gaze onward with bounding hope, however threatening the future? Our bodies, victims as they are to infirmity and disease and decay—how admirably they serve us. Our minds, limited in their grasp of truth, one-sided and ever following a bias, yet how nobly do they even thus carry us on from strength to strength in our appointed upward progress. Our immortal spirits, chained down as they are to the flesh, and minding earthly things, yet how wonderfully fitted are

they to echo the voice of conscience, how mercifully made capable of seeking after God and finding Him—of yearning for eternal blessedness, and accepting His way to achieve it. And if His ordinary and creation-mercies should warm our hearts, and find utterance of praise from our lips, how should those hearts glow with fire, and those lips burst forth in songs of joy, when we remember that all our *choicest* blessings are not His ordinary creation-gifts, but special bestowals of undeserved mercy and inconceivable love; when we look on ourselves, lost, ruined, guilty, perishing; and on Him, sending His own co-equal and glorious Son, the King of Heaven and Lord of Earth, to enter into the narrow limits of our poor humanity, to obey, to suffer, to die, that we might live. Surely our one thought must be, when we think on these things, “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name: bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”

But if this praise, notwithstanding infirmities, sins, sorrows, sicknesses, be the daily attitude and employ of individual Christians, shall the collected Church send up no tribute of gratitude? On the day when the labour of the world is laid aside, when our cares are put by for awhile, when even our sorrows are forgotten or sanctified, shall we forget to glorify God, who has made for us this interval of sacred peace?

We have left each our solitary place,—the closet where we pray in secret and praise Him for our personal mercies : and we assemble here, the sheep of His pasture,—the flock, to rejoice in its Shepherd. Shall the praise which formed a part of our service at home, find no place here, where we realize our Christian fellowship, and meet to cheer one another on the way? Not so has the Church ever judged ; and therefore from the first she has made praise to be one of the most considerable as well as one of the most delightful portions of her public worship. No sooner have we, on assembling here, humbly confessed our sins to God, listened to His gracious message of pardon to the penitent, and made use of that prayer which realizes our adoption as His reconciled children by Christ, than the minister exhorts the people, “Praise ye the Lord ;” to which they reply, “The Lord’s name be praised.” And then we join in a solemn strain of thanksgiving, “O come, let us sing unto the Lord—let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.” Thus praise holds a most prominent and important position in our ordinary services. The same is true of every separate portion of the Liturgy. Even in the Litany, which from its nature is penitential and self-abasing, the hymn “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost” is introduced as its tribute of praise. And in the Communion Service we have the

two noble hymns of the ancient Church, "Therefore with angels and archangels," and "Glory be to God on high."

It may be in the remembrance of some here present, that at the beginning of this year I preached two sermons on the connexion and intention of our morning and evening services. In those sermons I found especial occasion to call your attention to the people's part of the Liturgy. I pointed out, that the portion allotted to the congregation is as definite and precisely marked, as that allotted to the minister; and that it is as unreasonable for them to allow their part to pass in silence, as it would be for him to abstain from uttering his. I shewed you that it was the privilege of Protestant congregations to take full share in the service, and that it should be the pride, as it is the duty, of every son and daughter of the English Church to assert this their right and privilege, by responding aloud; that all false modesty on this point should be overcome, all dictation of mere fashion courageously resisted, and the simple path of duty unostentatiously but firmly followed. These remarks I made, because I found the practice of responding nearly altogether disused here. I am happy to have traced, and to be able to acknowledge, a very marked improvement in this respect. I do not however mention the subject now merely for this purpose; but because I wish to take it up

again, and carry the same arguments and inferences yet further. I just mentioned, in one of these sermons, the subject of praise; and I said that for an obvious reason I would not then say all I wished to say respecting it. That reason is to-day for the first time removed. It would have been neither expedient nor delicate, during the continuance of a system and the presence of those who represented it, to enter on an arraignment of the system, in which it might be felt by them, and imagined by others, that they were involved. But now that the system is discontinued, and has become a thing of the past, I feel that it is due to the subject, and to yourselves, to enter upon it, and present to you a justification both of that which we have already done, and of our hopes for the future.

The question, by the answer of which I hope to justify both, will be this,—*Of what kind should be the praise of the assembled Church? Does it consist in listening to the performance of sacred music by others, or in the whole congregation joining in the praises of God?* And here let me put in two observations by way of caution. First, that I must not be understood to disparage in any way the skilful performance of sacred music. Let by all means the first composers devote their skill, and the choicest singers the perfection of their art, to uttering the praises of God, and to the performance of all those various

pieces of music which directly or indirectly treat of or approach sacred subjects. Let there be proper places where such performances can be carried on, and let all the care and preparation possible be bestowed on them. This will have a direct tendency to elevate the public taste, to soothe men's feelings, to ennoble their ideas and promote reverence; and may be used to subserve, as occasions occur, works of piety and charity. Nor would I altogether banish such performances from our churches. I can conceive some occasions in most churches which may warrant them; and some churches distinguished among others, where they may be always appropriate. In most parishes, there may be particular solemnities when it may have a good effect to make an exception in favour of an unusual musical performance; and if the cathedral service is to be a recognized part of our church practice, it must be because it is felt that carefulness and precision in ecclesiastical music should somewhere have its example among us, and that such example should not be in an ordinary parish church, but in one of an exceptional kind. But my enquiry to-day is respecting the *ordinary praise of an ordinary congregation*. Ought this to consist, as it has here consisted on Sunday mornings, in listening to the voices of a few highly practised singers? And to this question there can be but one answer: undoubtedly not. We do not come

here as our ordinary Sunday duty, merely to *listen to praise*; we come here to *utter praise*. It is the duty and it is the right of the congregation to offer songs of praise to God; not to stand by while others do it. I am aware of course of the objections which are so commonly urged when congregational singing is mentioned. First we are told that all cannot sing. I answer to this, that we do not expect nor require that all should. Let us but have the help of all who are confessedly able, and our purpose is amply attained. I am speaking to many who have bestowed much precious time, and much expense, on acquiring the art: let us only have them on our side; let them but earnestly and heartily join, and we shall have such congregational singing as is seldom found. Another objection is, the vastly inferior character of such singing to that which you have been in the habit of hearing. This is undoubtedly so, and must be so. But let me remind you again, that it is not, and ought not to be our object, in coming here, to hear beautiful music; that such hearing forms no part, properly speaking, as I have already said, of our ordinary public worship. And as to the objection that the refined and sensitive musical ear will be offended by congregational singing, I hope it is one which however well it may be grounded at first, time may tend to remove; and that those who urge it may find gradually

another feeling rising within, when they hear the multitudinous praise of the congregation swelling upward : a feeling that will supersede undue criticism, and bear them above the ready offence of the ear ; a feeling like that of the sweet musician of Israel, when in his sickness and sorrow he yearned for the courts of his God, as he remembered how he used to go with the multitude, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holiday.

It is with these views that, after considerable delay, occasioned not by any doubt on the subject, but by the necessity of some kind of preparation, I have at length effected the change from our highly practised singers and our elaborate anthems to a humbler but I hope more appropriate and devotional kind of praise. I assure you it has not been done without some anxiety how our congregation might feel on the subject, and some gathering of opinions on it. And I believe I may say that, as far as I have been enabled to ascertain, by far the majority will be rejoiced at the change. I know however, that it will produce some disappointment ; and it is as well on that account, as to bespeak your help for our congregational praise, that I address you on the subject to-day. I wish to shew you that there are important reasons for the change, that it is not lightly made, nor one slight in itself. I deeply felt that our performance of difficult anthems for mere musical effect

was a feature in our public worship which could not be maintained consistently with the earnest and serious advancement of our work in our recently allotted district and neighbourhood. Our work must be undertaken in prayer, with thanksgiving. And both our prayer and our thanksgiving must be genuine and full of meaning—consistent and real. Where would these characteristics have been under the continuance of our late system? The inconsistency of it with the worship of a congregation in earnest was painfully shewn by the presence of idle persons every Sunday morning, of late in increasing numbers, who rose and left the chapel at the end of the anthem. I deeply felt it to be incompatible with my work among you, and to be one of the last remnants of a system now almost wholly exploded by the improving taste and feeling of churchmen. In the new course which we have this day begun, we look to you for support. And I trust and believe that no great length of time will shew that there can be here what will be infinitely better than the most skilful performance of known and admired singers,—the united praise of a thankful and willing people.

But let me not seem to be spending all our time on this subject, nor to be wasting a golden opportunity on a mere matter of detail. “Let all the people praise Thee.” What though to some be denied the gift of praising Him with

the lips ; there is a more abiding and a worthier praise than this. A thousand secret strains of melody are uttered in His ear, by the consistency and devotion of holy lives, more grateful than all the offerings of the voice. And these praises all can sing. All can go their way and humbly serve Him in the duties of life ; all can fly as guilty sinners to the cross of Christ, and walk soberly, righteously, and godly by the faith that is in Him ; all can seek and find grace to shun the real discords of this world,—the conscience at variance with itself, the professed service of God clashing with the actual service of the world and the flesh, the distorted estimate which sets things temporal above things eternal. These are the harsh sounds which offend His ear,—not the imperfect praise of the willing heart,—but the loathsomeness of hypocrisy, the selfishness of fashionable life, the inward unbelief of the outwardly correct and regular. Let these things be set right, and our sacrifice of praise shall be acceptable to Him through His beloved Son.

“ Let all the people praise Thee ;” not here only in the church, nor on the Lord’s day only, but through all the vicissitudes of daily life. Some, in their families, speaking of Him and His mercies every day to their assembled households ; not ashamed to remind those by whose labour they live and are served, that we all have a Master in heaven ; not disowning that

tie of common humanity and common immortality which binds together the highest and lowest, nor afraid of forfeiting temporal respect by conferring eternal benefit. Others again among their children, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,—not only winning for them an earthly inheritance suitable to their rank here, but pointing them onward to that heavenly inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Others again in the mean and humble dwellings of the poor,—going about doing good; lighting up the dim chamber of want and friendlessness with their cheering presence and their words of comfort, ready at the first news of sickness or bereavement to minister relief or speak consolation; warm and hearty with that sweet and welcome sympathy, which is worth a thousand gifts. Others again in the busy haunts of commerce, and amidst the crowding and crushing of the selfish world,—living and dealing as seeing Him who is invisible,—just, and fair, and generous, for His sake who sought not His own, but came to witness to the truth. These all may praise Him—these, and many more. Have we not been told of many hundreds of British officers, toiling in the camp and tossing on the waters of the ocean, who in the prospect of peril and of the foe have bound themselves to

plead in prayer for their country and for one another, and to wrestle with their God for the blessing of peace? Have we not already seen some of the blessed fruits of such a holy combination, in the merciful and generous treatment of the prisoners of war whom Providence has cast into our hands? These, brethren, are the real praises of God; these are the anthems which reach His throne, and to which the choirs of angels pause on their harps to listen; these the sweet sounds which, like the clear voice of the practised singer, ring audible to Him above the din and stir of life, and the wild uproars of war.

And if praise be the privilege and joy of our lives here below,—if even in decay and in sight of death the Christian's eye can brighten with thankfulness,—who shall imagine the praises of eternity,—when all that now jars and is discordant is for ever removed,—when no voice shall falter, because there shall be no infirmity nor sin? Well may the Scripture describe that praise as ■ new song, which none knoweth but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life. It is this song, beloved, to which I would lead you onward; for which I would educate every ear and tune every voice, and fire every heart. O my friends, may none of us be wanting there; may none of us cast ourselves away upon this wretched and fleeting world, and praise and be praised by ourselves, and praise

and be praised by one another, but forget to praise God or to seek to be praised by Him ! There, when the chorus of heaven and earth is made up, may our band be found entire—our part in it unbroken—our preparation complete : there may all our people praise Him !

Finally, remember His own solemn words ; think of them in the light of Christ's redemption, and ponder them at the foot of His cross : " Whoso offereth praise, he honoureth Me : and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God ²."

² Psalm l. 32.

SERMON XXII.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1854.

2 COR. V. 14.

“The love of Christ constraineth us.”

WE have now been spared to follow our Saviour through the whole of that wonderful life, the events of which mark the progress and accomplishment of our Redemption. We have seen Him born into our world,—growing up in subjection to the law of His Father in heaven and the will of His parents on earth,—coming forth to manifest Himself to Israel;—received with hostility, and conspired against unto death;—delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged and crucified. We have stood by His cross, and have beheld the place where they laid Him. We have partaken of the newly springing hopes of the resurrection morning. And now we are near the close of that solemn and joyful period when, having proved to His chosen ones the

truth of His resurrection, He was about to be taken from them into glory. Of that His Ascension I will not now speak. Its necessity, its accomplishment, its consequences, will all come before us on the day specially appointed for its commemoration. But we will now cast a look backwards over that Life of Christ, and strive to gather up for our use the great lesson to be learned from it.

If we think on any of the graces and virtues which adorn the most exalted human character, we find their highest pattern in our Lord. But far above all these, in a manner surpassing any human precedent or even any human conception, do we find in Him the highest pattern of LOVE. He himself has declared to us, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends." Yet not only this did He do; He underwent the contradiction of sinners against himself,—all the time having come to save those very sinners; He looked on us guilty and lost, aliens from his glory and enemies to Him, and for such He left his Father's throne, He suffered and died. No hatred of sin was ever like His. No horror of death, the wages of sin, could ever be like His. Yet He endured to be placed in contact with sinners, He endured to go down into the dark valley of the shadow of death, to save man. "Herein is love," exclaims the Apostle, as if there never was another example of it in

the world. "Herein is love"—but not on our parts—"not that we loved God"—we hated Him; the behaviour of the world towards Christ was just what ours would have been—what ours in fact is, day by day; "but that He loved us," freely, fully, undeservedly; "and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins."

Now, dear friends, what is the USE of such a noble example of Love? WHY has God set forth the character of His blessed Son in so clear and bright a light as the flower and crown of Love? Why did He leave his exalted place, and come down here and obey and suffer and die in our sight? Was there any need, in the great plan of redemption, for this peculiar manifestation of Himself to the sons of men? I know, and I have insisted on it more than once here,—there was deep necessity that He should become man, and obey, and suffer, and die; but why all this *so openly*, and before the sight of all men? Why should not the great facts of Redemption have been wrought out in some obscure corner of the world, unwitnessed and in secret? Their *efficacy* would have been the same, if no Gospel had been written, no glad tidings published. The perfect obedience of the incarnate Son of God would have been equally acceptable to the Father, if no angelic hosts had heralded His advent in the flesh, no star drawn the Gentiles to His cradle, no fore-

runner pointed Him out to Israel, no heavenly voice recognized Him. The blood-shedding of the spotless Lamb of God would have been equally the atonement for our guilty world, had no witnesses borne record of what they saw beneath the cross; and the Resurrection-morning would have equally been the birth of new life from the dead, if all the glad voices which rung out "The Lord is risen," had been hushed in silence. Why, then, again, have we all these things noted down and preserved for us? Why, when the lives of myriads of the sons of men have melted like snow-flakes on the ocean of oblivion, is this one, with all its words and deeds, its beginning, its progress, its end, chronicled so minutely? Is it that we may gaze upon Christ's character as on some bright orb of perfection far out of our reach—that orators may speak His panegyrics, and poets sing His praises? Bright and perfect indeed is that character beyond all our power of apprehension; the vigour of the mature understanding may well be bestowed in contemplating its depths, and the enthusiasm of imaginative youth in dwelling on its loveliness; the orator may worthily spend his treasures of thought and weave his sparkling tissue of words to adorn it, and the sweetest poet celebrate it in his rarest song; but it was not for this that the Spirit of God published the acts and words of the Saviour. Was it again that

we who pass by might be melted into tears at His exceeding sorrow—that our souls might be sad with His, and our hearts bleed with His heart? Well, brethren, may our tears flow when we see Him bruised and put to grief,—and hard indeed must be the heart that softens not at the recital of His sufferings: but it is not for this that they are recorded. All this might take place, and the man might remain as and where he was before. The eye might gaze on the bright vision, while the heart was cleaving to the dust of the earth; the orator might declaim on His perfection with a tongue venal in the service of self and Satan; the poet might utter His praises on a lyre desecrated in the orgies of sense and pleasure; the depths of the feeling might be stirred, but the life unchanged. O it was for something very far beyond all this, that the birth and growth and obedience and death and triumph of Christ stand graven on the monumental pages of Scripture; for a worthier end than any of these, that angels have watched from age to age over that precious book;—that not the ravages of time, nor the pillage of barbarous nations, nor the malice of the enemies of the faith, have ever been suffered to cancel one chapter nor one sentence of the eternal Gospel. It was FOR THIS—that Christ's love might CONSTRAIN us; that the exhibition of His wonderful love might not merely astonish us, not merely call

forth our admiring words in sermon or in song, not merely melt us into tears,—but **CONSTRAIN** us,—attract and draw us from what *we are*, to what *He is*!—bind us into a certain line of desires and hopes and words and acts, all in the direction whither He is gone before us, all tending upwards towards Him, and away from the service of the world and self and Satan.

Now first I pray you observe, what kind of a constraint this is. Constraint is not at first sight a pleasing thing. It is associated with the idea of a superior power mastering us against our will; with bonds, and struggling, and sullen and unpersuaded resignation. Nor does it altogether lose this character even here. Our natural bent is contrary to the attraction. The tide of the world sets decidedly against it. It is mighty, and gets the mastery over the whole man. It casts down the strongholds within, and subdues every thought into captivity. Many are the struggles against it, sore the conflict ere it is thoroughly obeyed. And though the resignation to it is not sullen, as we shall see, yet it is not the verdict of mere reason, not the decision of the sense; it is a being led and treated like a child—a walking by faith and not by sight. So that, for this is my point, *it is* a constraint after all, and we must not let the word lose its force. Self is mortified, contradicted, thwarted, by those who obey it; natural tendencies are

counteracted, natural licence is restrained; the man is a captive, a fettered man, drawn by cords without him in a direction whither no natural impulse would ever lead him. This is most important to bear in mind; for otherwise men will be imagining that they can live on as they are, and at the same time follow Christ.

But again; being a constraint, WHAT KIND of constraint is it? Not a despotic constraint, like the law, with its 'shalt' and 'shalt not,' spoken in thunder from Sinai: not an unreasonable constraint, like that of self and Satan, chaining men to compliances which they know to be unlawful and fatal to truth and peace; not an arbitrary constraint, like the shifting fashions of this vain world, which men follow blindly about, not knowing whither they may lead them. It is none of these, but its law is generated in the soul itself, and in its best and highest portion. Its cord that binds men is woven out of the noblest of human motives—faith, gratitude, adoration. "The Son of God loved me"—this is its first principle, graven deeply on the heart. This is no vague admiration of His love; this goes beyond the orator and the poet; this is the guilty sinner grasping his Saviour,—the drowning mariner reaching at his plank; a fact not only consented to by the understanding, not only uttered by the lips, not only overflowing at the fountain of tears,—but fixed in the central depths

of the personal being — resident, and paramount, in the council chamber of the heart. “The Son of God loved me”—am I convinced of this? then He is bound to me, and I to Him; wherever He is, there am I; wherever I am, there is He. Is He born into the world? The angels’ song is my heart’s utterance: “Glory to God on high, peace on earth, good will to men.” In this direction runs my desire; to this points onward my hope; for this are spent my exertions in life. Do I look on His cross? There am I crucified with Him—lost to sin and the world and dead to them, because there were my sins crucified—there their guilt removed, and their power broken. Do I see the stone rolled away from His sepulchre, and hear the glad words “He is not here but risen?” O then I am risen with Him; my life is hid with Him in God; not here, but where He is: there my affections, There my hopes, there my treasure. And where I am, there is He. Am I before His throne of grace? There He speaks with me in the reality of spiritual communion Am I in the busy world? There He walks with me, and guides my steps. Am I in sorrow? He sits by, and His comforts refresh my soul. Am I passing through the valley of the shadow of death? He is with me; His rod and His staff, they comfort me. The cords of love bind us: and never can my thoughts be disunited from Him,—never can His anxious

care and heavenly presence cease to be around and over me. This is the foundation of the constraint of which we are speaking to-day. And O for more among you, dear friends, of this personal grasping of the Saviour,—more of this inward conviction, ‘The Son of God loved me.’

But more, ‘The Son of God gave Himself for me;’ gave HIMSELF, for ME. What did He exchange for me? What did He sacrifice, in order to get me? Me, a poor unworthy feeble creature—full of ingratitude, of inconsistencies, of broken resolutions, of hypocrisies and selfishness? What was it? Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth; it was not the choicest gem of his creation, not the first of the princes of the angelic host; these were worthless to buy my eternal welfare, poor and abject as I am; but He gave HIMSELF, the uncreated one, the Son coeternal with the Father:—this was the price which He laid down to save me. And O shall not this His mighty love win me to Him? Shall it not work within me to constrain me to give myself to Him? “He gave Himself for me;” He purchased me; I am not my own, I am bought with a price,—with His precious life. Justice, gratitude, love, all combine to constrain me to live to myself no longer, but to Him who thus loved me and gave himself for me.

Let us come closer to the point. Practical effect is what we want, not to send you home

with a number of conventional religious phrases sounding in your ears, but to plant some of those words which may be like nails driven in a sure place, and may abide in the heart long after their sound has died away. What will be the effect of this constraint which the love of Christ exercises over a man's heart and character? Perhaps it will be best seen if we take one or two well-known instances, and exemplify it by them.

In that wonderful gospel which, being written by the disciple whom Jesus loved, is above all the gospel of love, and has in it depths and treasures of love which many dream not of,—we read of two disciples of Jesus,—Nicodemus, who came to Him by night, and Joseph of Arimathæa, who himself was Jesus' disciple, but secretly for fear of the Jews. I dare say these men, as the term disciple implies, had often listened to our Lord's teaching. They had often crept stealthily to Him, and drunk in His words. But they had not courage to avow themselves. Condemn Him they would not; so they kept aloof when the council met and plotted his death. At length that stupendous act of love, of which He had often spoken to them in dark and mysterious words, was accomplished. They saw Him, the mighty one who had quelled the tempests with a word, who had commanded diseases at a distance, who had called the dead from their graves, submit

to be bound, to be insulted, to be scourged, to be crucified. They saw Him DIE; and they knew, because He had told them, that that death was an act of love,—a glorious triumph of self-sacrifice. What was the effect? The men were changed men: the love of Christ constrained them. Their timidity disappeared. And the Apostle introduces them at this point in his narrative, to shew the first achievement of the death of Christ;—to give an example of its constraining power over the timid and irresolute. Joseph, fearless now, went in boldly unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Nicodemus brought his hundred pound weight, a precious and costly offering, of myrrh and aloes. And thus, when the Apostles had all fled and were in despondency, when even the faithful women looked on at a distance, did these two Jewish councillors, constrained by His love, come forward, and incur ridicule and hazard persecution by paying the last honours to his sacred Body. Beloved, here is a powerful practical lesson for us. Are any of you coming to Jesus by night,—students of His word, worshippers of Him at your bedsides, wishing to honour Him in your heart,—consulting Him as a teacher come from God,—but by day and outwardly, in the world, and of the world? Learn from Nicodemus. He saw the death on the cross, but he saw it not then as you do. He knew not of it then as the ransom for a

perishing world. This was as yet dark and doubtful to him. And still, viewed as a token of love, that death constrained him. He came forward in the face of his colleagues of the council with his noble offering; he took up the despised Body, marred and torn as it was, and cared for it in spite of scorn and contempt. And shall not the Love of Christ constrain you too? O if you feel its power only as he did, you will no longer rest in cold respect for Jesus and his sayings, but will come forward for Him and cast in your lot with his people,—will shake off the selfishness and vain display and heartlessness and ungodliness of the world in which you live, and stand forth as consistent and manly and self-denying Christians, doing all in His name, and spending all for His service. Again, are any of you disciples of Jesus, but secretly for fear of men,—not indeed consenting to the counsel and deed of them when they oppose and reject and conspire against Him, but cloaking your withdrawal, as probably this Arimathæan did, under other and secondary reasons,—ashamed to confess yourselves His? Learn from Joseph. Though he did not witness the deed resolved on, he saw it done. In the view of his colleagues and of the world, the cause of Jesus of Nazareth had set in eternal shame; that name would henceforward be cast out as infamous. Not so in his view. That constraint had begun in his heart, which we have

described as the blessed effect of Christ's love ; and thenceforth not all respect for his fellows in the Sanhedrim, nor all dread of what the world without might say and think of him, weighed aught in his estimation. His own new tomb, which he had made for himself, was given up to be the resting place of a criminal who had died by a public and shameful execution ; of a body accursed as having been hanged on a tree. Before he did this, he must have made his account to be called a fool and a madman. But love constrained him ; he was a disciple of Christ, and with noble self-sacrifice, and true Christian devotion, he followed Christ through reproach and shame. O for more of this noble self-sacrifice among ourselves ; for more of this true Christian devotion ; for more men who are not ashamed nor afraid to stem the current of selfishness, and stand against the tide of ungodliness, and be called fools and madmen if needs be, for Christ's sake ; who are not ashamed to utter that name as their constraining motive, and glory in it, in the haunts and concourse of men, where it will bring with it reproach, and the imputation of false motives, and the censorious blame of the worldly wise : men who will avow their Christian principles, and stand by them in daily life.

But let me not speak only to those who have to mingle in the busy world, and to serve in the front ranks of Christ's army. To them, it is

true, belongs the highest and by far the most difficult part of the task; to them the most prominent and wide-spread influence for good. To be tried and known as a Christian man in the senate, in professional life, in the mart of commerce, in general society, this is the rarest and most arduous result of the constraining love of Christ. But I am also addressing many, who serving confessedly in the second rank, have yet the blessed privilege of testifying to Christ at home; of giving to their children the inestimable gift of a Christian mother's example, and teaching their servants to look to the hand of a mistress who herself recognizes the hand of God in all things. You too, dear friends, must be constrained by the love of Christ. No mere decent reverence for His name, or His service, or His word, will ever make a Christian household: if your children and dependents see you religious in word and outward act, and yet votaries of pleasure, absorbed in the giddy vortex of this world's gaiety, there will be no good effect produced, toil you never so hard for it: a worldly mistress makes an ungodly household. But if you be really constrained by the Love of Christ, if seeing what He gave up for you, you feel yourselves compelled by gratitude to give up somewhat for Him—to rescue for example some moments from self-indulgence, that your children and dependents may meet daily in family prayer,—

or suffer some personal inconvenience in the arrangement of the hours of the Lord's day, that every servant in your household may have at least *one* opportunity of worshipping in the house of prayer,—then, when they begin to see that your service of Christ is no mockery but a reality, will the blessed effect begin;—then will they begin to strive to follow you, as you follow Christ.

But I am also speaking to numbers of the young. And for them this text has a voice of cheering and pleasant invitation. “The Love of Christ constraineth us.” See, my young friends, the religion into which you have been baptized, and which we call on you to follow and to adorn. Some would persuade you to regard religion as a constraint. I own it. It is a constraint; but what constraint? the constraint of LOVE. This is all. Once let the Love of your Saviour sink into your hearts and work there,—we ask no more. We impose no other law: love is the fulfilling of the law. Be not afraid then of gloom, or compulsion, in the service of Christ. They that love, are not apt to act gloomily or from compulsion. They go ever eagerly onwards; difficulties, dangers, self-denials, are nothing to them: love makes all easy. So let it be with you. Let the well-spring of action be within—Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me. And then your lives will be cheerful and happy—you will be carried

onward by earnest desire and fervent hope; and though you may have the common portion of sorrow, you will have far more than the common portion of comfort, and at the end joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And if I might venture without appearance of presumption to say one word to those of whom it is written, "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father," it should be this. Our subject is full of comfort and encouragement to you also. Violent and sudden changes are alien from advancing years; long experience has brought long habit, and proposals of change are coldly listened to. But we do not find the aged heart closed to tender affection, nor slow to be constrained by the gentle words of love. The noon of life may be torrid, and the soil dry: but the morning and evening bring the refreshing dews. And if we reckon up the results of many bereavements, and widened sympathies, and multiplied infirmities, perhaps the aged weep more tears than the young. It is not then past your power to be constrained by love, though you do not easily admit of change. Thus may you be changed, by the contemplation of the Love of Christ. You can tell best of all men, for you have known the world longest, what unworthy creatures the Son of God gave himself to save. You love meditation: meditate on this; and may his Love constrain you to

live to Him, and glorify Him, while yet you have time.

I know not with what better wish I can close, than that which the great Apostle uttered for his Ephesians ; “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

SERMON XXIII.

ASCENSION DAY.

1854.

JOHN xiv. 2.

“I go to prepare a place for you.”

IN these few and simple words does our Lord announce to his disciples the necessity and the object of his removal from them. They are words obviously bearing a figurative meaning; not to be understood as of one really gone to make ready a material abode for the reception of his disciples, but as of one gone from us in pursuance of a great divine plan, which required that the state for which God intended his people should be made ready for them, and they for it; and both these parts of his great design were to be accomplished by our Lord ascending up to the right hand of the Father.

Let us then consider to-day,—the necessity of his departure from us; the accomplishment

and process of that departure; and its consequences as regards his Church.

Had the Lord Jesus remained with us here below, various great ends of his mission must have rested unfulfilled. He had indeed put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. That cross had been uplifted, on which the sinner was to look and be saved. He had risen, victorious over death and the grave. But both these great events, his crucifixion and his resurrection, were but steps in the way of the greatest event of his whole appointed course,—the glorification of his manhood, and of us in Him. Had He remained below, we may not say that this *could* not have been; because it is not for us to limit God to any defined place in his workings; but according to his own declaration, it *would* not have been. He ever treats of his reception to the Father as his great exaltation and the entering into his glory. Without this, the manhood in Him, our whole nature which He bore, was justified, was quickened;—but it was not glorified.

Again it was not the purpose of God in redemption, merely to clear us from guilt, nor merely to place us in acceptance, but to renew us after the divine likeness,—to build up again, infinitely more glorious for the conflict with sin and suffering, that image, which in our first parents had been ruined. And this our Lord again and again taught his disciples, could not

be accomplished, without his being taken from them. It was to be the especial work of the Holy Spirit dwelling in and operating on men's hearts; convincing them of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. And this Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the builder up and strengthener of mankind, would not come, unless our Lord first went to the Father; unless He reunited himself to Him from whom He had come forth to suffer and to save. Thus when He ascended up on high, He received gifts for men, that God might dwell among them: the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, and our glorified Redeemer became the channel of grace and light,—that light which is the spiritual life of men. I will not dwell more now on this part of our subject, because it will come before us in all its detail on that day, when we commemorate the descent of the Spirit on the Church.

Moreover the Ascension was necessary, for the manifestation of Christ's sovereignty. "To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living¹." He had laid aside—emptied Himself of, his glory, when He came into this world. And no manifestation of majesty here below could ever have been equivalent to the resumption by Him of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was—still less

¹ Rom. xiv. 9.

to the accession of glory with which Redemption has crowned Him. And consequently we read that "God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

And I mention this His sovereignty here, as being intimately connected with that of which we have already spoken, the gradual change to be accomplished in our world, during the period of his removal from us in the flesh. This sovereignty is not to be at once established, but by degrees. "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." "We see not yet," says the Apostle, "all things put under him." Man, in God's great work of Redemption, is not to be crushed down and subjugated as under the feet of a conqueror, but leavened by gradual influence and persuaded;—and the kingdom of the Redeemer to be established by the use of human means in the course of revolving ages. As we see in the natural formation of this earth, that one state of things has succeeded another, all less favourable to our existence and well-being than the present one, till at last that number of states had been passed through, that happy balance of physical influences reached, which should cause this earth to afford place for man's habitation, and

teem with plenty for his support;—so it is God's pleasure that it should be likewise with the moral and spiritual world: that the reign of truth and peace shall not be established in a moment, but through the conflict of hostile influences, by the superposition of many unfavourable, or less favourable conditions of individual and social humanity, till at length the state of grace and knowledge and love has been brought in, upon which the full glories of the final kingdom are destined to arise. And thus ages on ages lie in the divine mind between Christ's glorification in heaven, and his glorification in his saints on earth; but to all those ages the Ascension was the first necessary introduction: it opened the door of grace in heaven, through which shone out the dawn of glory.

Again, it was necessary for us, and for the accomplishment of this great end,—that Christ should not be present, but absent from us. It was through sense, the inferior portion of our being, that the deceits of the tempter had won their way into man's heart. It is through sense that the world persuades men to cleave to it, as their supreme good. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, have no tendency to draw men upwards, or to assimilate them to God. As long as Christ was known after the flesh, as long as their eyes could see him, their hands handle him, the disciples were bewildered with low and sensual apprehensions

concerning him. Even to the last, as on this very day, on the path from Jerusalem to Bethany, they ask Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" It was doubtless most important, for the purposes of *testimony*, that they should see and hear and handle him, and eat and drink with him; but it was equally important, and necessary for their introduction into the higher state of the dispensation of the Spirit, that they should trust to sense in this matter no longer. "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." FAITH, not sense, is to be the medium by which the disciples are to hold communion with their Master, under the dispensation of the Spirit. The evidence of sense is to be put by and disregarded in spiritual things, and man is to be led by a principle far higher than and independent of it: the result it is true of the testimony of those who saw and heard Him, but itself an enduring as seeing Him who is invisible, and hearing a voice which speaks not outwardly and audibly, but in the recesses of the believer's heart. Thus we are drawn above that which we see and among which we dwell, up to that place whither Christ is gone before; and our affections being set on things above, and not on things on the earth,—our life hid with Christ in God,—we become changed in will and desires—have our home and citizenship above;

and where our treasure is, there is our heart also.

But another great necessity for our Lord's removal from us, is the work of His High Priesthood in heaven. He is gone into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. As the High Priest of old took of the blood of the sacrifice, and sprinkling it on himself and the vessels of the tabernacle, went into the Holy of Holies to offer it to God for the people,—so our High Priest Jesus Christ, having been offered for sin, has taken his own precious blood into the heavenly place itself, and there pleads with the Father for us. “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:” and every guilty sinner in this world has by Him access uninterrupted and direct, for himself, to the Father for pardon and peace.

For all these reasons, it was necessary that our Lord should be withdrawn from us. And we may well conceive that when the reasons were so powerful and weighty, the fact would be patent and undoubted.

And so we learn that it was. Jesus had now been forty days among his disciples: not always visible to them, but at certain times manifesting himself, and speaking to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God. On the last of these days, He was in the midst of them at Jerusalem, discoursing with them as

had been his wont. Together they went by the accustomed way out of the city to the mount of olives. In the former of the two accounts which St. Luke has given us, he specifies Bethany as the place to which He led them²: in the latter and more detailed narrative, they return from the mount of olives³. We may well conceive that the former is a general and undefined statement, Bethany being the district on the other side of the hill; and the latter the precise one, ascertained subsequently by the Evangelist on the spot itself. Nor is there any reason to doubt the correctness of tradition, which points out the summit of the mount of olives as the place of the Ascension. Having arrived there, he lifted up his hands and blessed them: and as He blessed them, He was parted from them. He ascended visibly through the air, and a cloud received him out of their sight. Thus open, thus undoubted, was his removal from them. Had He merely ceased to appear to them any longer, it might have been left in doubt what was become of him: his own words might indeed, in the course of the Spirit's teaching, have been rightly understood, and the results of his going to the Father made gradually plain to the Church: but they might also have been misunderstood: whereas now all obscurity is removed from them: the Apostles

² Luke xxiv. 50.

³ Acts i. 12.

saw the Son of Man ascend up where He was before: and his Ascension into heaven is an article of the Christian faith, founded on the irrefragable testimony of the whole apostolic body.

And now let us consider the results of this great event, with a view to our own faith and practice. First, it is the token to us of the entire acceptance of the Saviour's finished work in our nature. In Him our humanity is glorified, is received at the right hand of God. We have such an High Priest, who is seated on the Father's throne. Let us rejoice in the strength and completeness of our salvation. Let us rejoice, that in the Man Christ Jesus we are united to the Godhead, and God dwells among us by His Spirit. Then again, He is there to prepare a place for His people. Every event in His government of the world, every dispensation of His providence towards them, every year and every day as it passes, is a portion of that preparation. And when it shall have been completed,—when the last sinner shall have been reclaimed, and the last tear of suffering shed, and the last weapon of conflict wielded, the angelic promise shall be fulfilled; “that same Jesus, which was taken from us into heaven, shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven.” “If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also.” Our first lesson then

from this day's subject is, ever to look on the world's progress, and our own, as parts of this great preparation, and ever to be waiting and longing for the glorious event at its end. At times, the course of the world being peaceably ordered by God's governance, improvement seems to advance rapidly, the Church of Christ is fast extending, all is hope and encouragement; at other times, as at present, all is full of dreary anxiety and dread uncertainty,—none knowing whither our God is leading us, and all men's hearts failing them for fear of those things which are coming on the earth. Let us learn to look on all these vicissitudes, as the dark and mysterious, but certainly advancing footsteps of Him who is preparing a place for us. Perhaps again our own lot is full of strange inconsistencies and disappointments; when we hoped most, behold fear; the reeds on which we leant have gone into our hands and pierced them; health gives way, or friends are few, or riches make themselves wings and leave us:—but let us learn to regard all such events as the dealings of Him who is gone to prepare a place for us, and us for it. And His coming to us again,—O beloved, however it may be a matter of uncertainty as to time among even Scripture students,—however it may be scoffed at by the world or the worldly religious,—let us never forget to wait for Him from heaven; to look and long for the day of

the Lord,—and pray in the language of our Church, “that it may please Him shortly to accomplish the number of His elect, and hasten His glorious kingdom.”

Next, let the Ascension of our Lord draw our present thoughts and affections to the place whither He is gone before. Let us learn heavenly-mindedness. Heaven is set forth by Him as our pattern; “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” I know it is difficult, in the midst of the busy world, and with all its interests and employments thick around us, to live in an unseen state, and to feel our rights and our joys to be there, and to look for our promotion there, and not here; but faith is accustomed to difficulties; and as we before said, where the treasure is, there will the heart be. If we really love our Saviour—if that form of the ascended Jesus is ever before our sight as an object which we delight to dwell on,—if His glorified humanity is to us the spring of our joys, and the centre of our interests, the world may catch our fleeting thoughts, and employ our less earnest attentions, but He will have all our serious determinations, all our deepest affections; the world may be our tabernacle, but the place where He is will be our home.

And then His merciful Intercession should come before us to-day, in immediate connexion with the fact of His Ascension. “He is the

WAY—no man cometh to the Father but by Him.” And that blood which, in the work of his High Priesthood, He offers to the Father as the full and sufficient sacrifice, atonement, and satisfaction for the sins of the world, must be sprinkled on our hearts by faith, and become to us the double cure of our sin,—saving us from its guilt and its power. And O what boldness should it give us in prayer, what constancy and importunity, to reflect that we have such an One to plead for us in heaven,—one whom the Father ever hears;—in whom our weakest petition is strong. How earnestly should we look for the answer to our supplications—seeing that He hath promised “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it.”

Let me conclude with a few words respecting this day itself, and the ordinance of which we are about to partake together. The day of the Ascension, as you will have seen by what has been said, possesses a deep interest in the view of the Christian; has as good a claim for observance as that of our Lord’s birth, or that of his Crucifixion. It is in fact the great completion of his work of Redemption;—the seal set to all the rest,—and the introduction to the dispensation of the Spirit under which we live. And on this day, the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper has an especial propriety and solemnity. It is the commemoration of Him who is gone

from us ; it is the spiritual realizing of His presence with us which He promised to his Church "all the days even to the end ;" and it is to-day peculiarly significant as looking on to the future. Who can connect the partaking of the symbols of Christ's Body and Blood with His being above preparing a place for us, and not think of the day when He will drink of the fruit of the vine new with us in the kingdom of God ? To us, as Protestants, this day is important, as bringing before us its testimony to the pure and true doctrine of the ordinance. No argument can be so strong against the idolatrous fiction of transubstantiation, as the fact of the Ascension. "Our Lord's Body is in heaven, and not here ;" and it is, as our Church expresses it, "against the truth of Christ's natural body, that it should be at the same time in more places than one." In contemplating Him received to the right hand of the Father, we see a decisive proof, that our partaking of Him in this sacrament is not material or corporeal, but spiritual ; that the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed partaken, are so partaken by the faithful, and by them only. And the great fact of to-day will also save us from the more refined, but hardly less erroneous view, of some among ourselves, who have tried to persuade us that in the sacraments only we hold communion with the humanity of our Lord. That Humanity you have seen exalted to the Father's throne ;

but it is not the less ours for its exaltation. In the humanity of Christ, every son and daughter of Adam has a share according to the flesh, so that He is the common Head of us all and our representative before God; and whosoever cometh to the Father by Him shall be received, without priest or other mediator, without formal ordinance or prescribed method of approach. And into the glorification of that Humanity, pregnant as that word is with many blessed meanings—justification, sanctification, preservation through faith to salvation—only those can share who are begotten again by the Spirit into that life which Christ lives—who have spiritually died unto sin and been born again unto righteousness. And of this life, however the sacraments are the symbols and assurances, the Holy Spirit alone in the heart and life is the bestower, the upholder, the perfecter.

May this day's event be to us in all these ways profitable and full of edification. May we, like the apostolic band of old, after witnessing the Lord's Ascension, return to our homes with joy, with our hearts lifted up to Him where He is;—and may we be found, as they were, continually in the temple, praising and blessing God; in the duties of our daily lives, and on these our solemn occasions, testifying that we have a Master in heaven, for whose coming we wait, according to His word.

SERMON XXIV.

WHIT-SUNDAY.

1854.

ACTS xix. 2.

“And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”

I THINK I must be speaking the mind of many here present, when I say, that of all the departments of our Christian teaching, none is so unsatisfactorily served, as that which should set forth to us the doctrine of the operations of the Holy Spirit. We confess the Holy Spirit to be one of the three persons in the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son; yet it cannot be denied, that practically we do not recognize Him as such, either in giving Him honour, or looking for His aid. We acknowledge Him to be the originator, the upholder, the finisher, of the spiritual life in the soul; but we too often lose sight of His agency,

and forget our own admissions respecting Him. We recognize His descent upon the Church to have been the great result of all that the Lord Jesus did, and the accomplishment of the promise of the Father by the Son: and yet Christians in general have an exceedingly vague idea of the effects of that descent: what difference it made between those who lived after it and those who lived before it: what practical every-day meaning it has for us, in this nineteenth century after the event. We read in our Bibles of the Spirit "bearing witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God¹;" that "hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us²:" yet we hardly presume to enquire what this testimony of the Spirit is, for fear of falling into enthusiasm or superstition. And thus in the Christian church thousands live and die, not so much as knowing whether there be any Holy Ghost: hearing His name, and now and then listening to sermons on Him and His work, but having no real lively interest in what they hear respecting Him.

Now it must be plain to us all, that such inconsistency on any point is much to be blamed; and equally plain, if we would think on the matter, that this is a subject on which we can least of all afford to be backward or ignorant. Nothing can be plainer or more solemn than the declarations of Scripture on

¹ Rom. viii. 16.

² 1 John iii. 24.

it. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God³. And the whole course of prophecy goes to establish the immense importance, and the high privileges, of the dispensation of the Spirit which should come in in the latter days—and which begun with His descent on the day of Pentecost. Let us then consider to-day the office and work of the Holy Spirit under the Christian covenant. And may He Himself be with us in an especial manner, while we are thus employed.

I will speak of Him first, as imparting His influence in consequence of the finished work of the Lord Jesus: as the great crowning blessing of redemption;—the unspeakable gift, for which eternal thanks are due to God.

The end of Redemption is,—to UNITE US TO GOD: to make us partakers of the divine nature. Christ having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and having overcome death and ascended up to the right hand of God, has taken, in the fulness of the words, the glorified manhood into the Godhead,—so that it is inseparably bound up in, and abides in, that glory which He had with the Father before the world began. And remember, that that manhood which Jesus has united to the Godhead, is not His as a human individual, so that

³ Rom. viii. 9. 14.

the blessings of its glorification should be confined to Him: but while it is His, in that He dwelt in it and made it His own in the incarnation, it is ours, the property of all our race; and thus He is the root, and Head, and King, and Sum, and Representative, of all mankind,—of the one blood of which God hath made all nations to dwell on all the face of the earth. Now mark the consequence of this Headship to all the race. He is the Head of the manhood, we are the members. Unworthy members there are, dead members, paralyzed members; there are professing members, made so by the special covenant of Baptism; there are also spiritual members, joined to the Lord, not in the flesh only, but by the Spirit; but in this widest sense in which God's covenant is drawn, *ALL are members*,—every man, woman, and child, of every nation under heaven, in this primary sense. Let us for a while dwell on this wide universal sense in which Christ is the Head of our humanity, with reference to the gift of the Spirit. The exalted Head is in union with God; in sweet accord with the Father, filled in every thought and feeling with the Holy Spirit of wisdom and power and love. And He, the Head, being thus knit to the Father, and full of the Spirit, has become to the members the channel of spiritual influence. Through Him the Holy Spirit descends on the sons of men; and through His finished work alone;

BECAUSE He, in our nature, is exalted to the right hand of the Father. And when that consummation of His work was accomplished, He shed forth this,—which the Jews and faithful men present saw and heard, and of which we have read to-day; as a token to His Church of the bringing in of the new dispensation, the Holy Spirit descended visibly and audibly, and the effects were apparent and immediate. Spiritually speaking, that communication was now first established, first since the separation of our race from God by sin, by which grace was freely and constantly imparted to the sons of men from the Father of grace and life and knowledge. From that moment mankind were in a new relation to God, in which they never were before that moment. No prophet nor saint of the old testament, with all his dignity of place in the theocracy, all his special inspiration, all his visions and converse with God, ever stood in the same place, as regards access to God, as each one of us stands now. Not Enoch, who walked with God; not Abraham, His friend; not Moses, who spake with Him face to face; not David, the man after His own heart; not Isaiah, whose lips the seraphim touched with a coal from the heavenly altar,—none of these, highly favoured as they were in their day and under their dispensation, is to be compared for a moment with the simplest child since the day of Pentecost, in respect of spiritual pri-

vilege. Our Lord's own words are plain on this point: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." "The prophets and the law prophesied until John." He was greater than they all, because he stood on the very threshold of the spiritual temple; but he went not in; whereas we are born and brought up and dwell in its inner courts, and have unlimited access to its very holiest place.

Now, brethren, this on which I am insisting is not a mere theological distinction for precision's sake,—but is of immense importance, and very little understood or appreciated. Take a large number of average Christians—take many among the clergy themselves, and they will tell you, on a first view of the subject, that the Old Testament saints had the same access to God by the Spirit as we have. It is true, that their error will not stand a moment before examination by the standard of Scripture, or careful thought; but so little do men go by Scripture, and so little careful thought do they commonly bestow on spiritual things, that you will find this same error repeated in books, and in sermons, and in conversation, year after year, by men really in earnest about the things of God. And thus we lose sight of the gift of the Spirit as the great end and result of re-

demption, and when such a day as this comes round, we look about us, not knowing what it has to do with our present condition,—why the Spirit was given, or in what sense He is with us now, and was not with the Church before.

To this point let us now come. The disciples were commanded by our Lord at His ascension not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father which, said He, ye have heard of Me. WHAT PROMISE OF THE FATHER? Nothing can be clearer than His own explanation: “For John,” said He, “truly baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence⁴.” They were then to wait for that promised Holy Spirit, who was to be to them more than ever Christ was when He was with them; for the benefit of whose coming it was even expedient that Jesus should go away from them. They did wait accordingly; and you know the result. With the power of sound, and with the vision of flame, God the Holy Ghost came among them; God came to dwell with men, not this time incarnate in the flesh, not this time to suffer and to die, but God in His own proper spiritual essence came down into man’s spirit;—God came, not to sojourn in the tent of humanity, but to dwell in His own glorious spiritual temple,—to fill the hearts of men with light,—to tune the voices of men to

⁴ Acts i. 4, 5.

utter His praise; to turn corruption into never-fading brightness, to make the desert bud and blossom as the rose:—to regenerate and renovate and bless this manhood of ours, by His ever-abiding presence. And what were His operations—how signified—how assured to the Church—how brought down to us? The mighty rushing wind,—the tongues of fire,—the utterance in various languages,—the miraculous gifts that played like flashes of guardian light round the cradle of the infant Church,—were these His chief or His only works—these all that we know of His abiding presence? Long ages since, this question was answered. Come with me for a moment into the barren Arabian wilderness, bristling with its torrid peaks, the home of the Law. There, on the mount of God, was the truth declared on this matter. In the entrance of a cave, wrapped in his mantle, stood Elijah the man of God. He had fled from persecution and bitter disappointment. He had taken refuge in the place where his great predecessor had communed with Israel's God. His soul sunk within him. But God called him by his name, What doest thou here, Elijah? In his anguish, he appealed to the Lord God of Hosts. He complained, and Jehovah came. "Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord

was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice⁵." And even thus it was on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost was not in the mighty rushing wind; nor in the tongues of flame; no, nor in those gifts that adorned and followed His advent: these were but the heralds and pursuivants of His approach; He Himself is a Spirit, spiritual,—and His own real descent was into the spirits of His people, there to testify of Christ in the still small voice of inward persuasion; there to shed abroad Christ's love; there to take of the things of Christ and shew them to men; there to testify of the sin of unbelief on Christ, of the righteousness of the manhood in Christ, of the wisdom which is His own gift through Christ. This gift was to be permanent; not temporary, as that of working miracles, or speaking with tongues. It was to be universal; not confined to a favoured few, nor to one race or family, but wide as our common manhood, bestowed alike on Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, bond and free, male and female, young and old, no limits confine it, but the limits of that race which the Lord took upon Him. And when St. Peter stood up with the eleven to explain to astonished Israel that which had come to pass, he selects out of the wide choice which prophecy gave him, one passage: "This," says he, "is that which was spoken by the prophet

⁵ 1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

Joel ; It shall come to pass in those days, saith the Lord, that I will pour out my Spirit upon, ALL FLESH."

And now we may press for an answer to the question, In what sense did the Holy Spirit now abide with men as never before ? I answer, first, as *testifying of Christ*. You have already seen the way in which the whole work of the Spirit in a man begins, continues, ends, in the Lord Jesus. To manifest Him, to draw men to Him, to bring them into captivity to His easy yoke and light burden,—this is the Spirit's operation in the human heart. And this it never could be, before Jesus was glorified. The testimonies to a Saviour to come, were necessarily vague and enigmatical ; not the subjects of firm personal reliance nor of blessed assurance, but only just prophetic glimpses into the far distance,—enough for those days, to keep the saints waiting on the Lord their God, but not to be compared for an instant with the work of the Spirit now. There could be then none of that sweet sense of reconciliation with God, which the Spirit keeps alive in the heart of the faithful man ; none of that constraint of heart and life, which is brought about by the Spirit's exhibition of Christ's exceeding love for us. So that the whole office and work of the Spirit became new and of a higher order, inasmuch as the truths with which it is now concerned were before unknown. "We speak," says St. Paul, "the wisdom of God in a mys-

tery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory : which none of the princes of this world knew : for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit⁶.”

Next, the Spirit has wrought since the day of Pentecost as He never wrought before, in the testimony which He bears in the heart of *every individual believer*. We do not read of any such direct access to God granted to individual men in ancient times. They were compelled to approach Him by ways distant and laborious, with costly sacrifices, and with hindrances interposed; other men were placed between them and their God; they had not yet the Spirit of adoption, whereby they could look on God as their reconciled Father, and on themselves as His children, in the liberty of love. But since the gift of the Spirit, we need no external approach to the Father of our spirits, no priesthood to stand between us and God; every man among us, living under the covenant whose sure seal is the blood of our great Mediator, and whose first promise is that God will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, may draw near in full assurance of faith, and humbly

⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 7—10.

claim his place as an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ; may yearn upward, and reach onward, in the earnest expectation of the creature waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. This is another great characteristic of the dispensation of the Spirit,—that all hierarchical distinction between man and man is for ever abolished,—all sacrifice superseded, except the abiding efficacy of the One Sacrifice, shed abroad in the heart of the spiritual man,—and each believer however humble, made to be a king and a priest unto God in an intimate and a glorious and an efficacious sense, such as neither king nor priest nor prophet nor psalmist ever knew of old. And therefore it is truly lamentable to find men under this higher dispensation still clinging to the weak and beggarly elements from which it has for ever delivered all the faithful; talking of grace derived through a succession of priests,—of sacramental sacrifices, and sanctity of time and place, giving us access to God. It is a shame that any of us should be found, with our Bibles in our hands, listening to such men, and surrendering our high individual prerogatives of access to the Father by the Son through the Spirit. I know nothing that speaks worse for the religious intelligence of our days, or for the right understanding of the Scriptures among us, than that such men should have been listened to as they have been, and should have led away so many from the truth as it is in Jesus. I cannot but see in it

one lamentable consequence of forgetting the proper work of the Spirit, and allowing it to keep its place in formal confession only, not in living reality.

Again, the indwelling Spirit of these latter days of the Church is eminently the *Spirit of wisdom*. The humble child, walking by the light of this Spirit, is wiser than his teachers if they have Him not. The advancing Christian is taught of God more and more the way in which he should go, and please his heavenly Father. The matured believer, rich in experience as in years of the Lord's service, is enabled to look down on the world and all that is in it, and count it but dross in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. All this is the work of the Holy Spirit,—unknown, unappreciated, despised, by the world without, who have not seen Him, and therefore do not believe on Him,—but a treasure peculiar to this higher dispensation, wrought in those who are united to Christ, and have the mind of Christ, by virtue of their being possessed and penetrated by the Spirit of Christ. And as following immediately on this individual work of the Spirit, He is *the Comforter*, in a sense in which the ancient saints never knew Him. He testifies that we are the sons of God—gives us firm assurance that the storms of life—the trials of dejection and disappointment and bereavement—are all working together for our good; bringing home to our hearts, that our

beloved Saviour was tried before us, and causing us to feel that our sufferings are but links of union to Him—that our part in Him is not imperilled, but assured, by our being called to follow Him through the Cross to the Crown.

And lastly, to return to our first point, the Spirit of God now abiding among us is a *transforming* Spirit; not merely enlightening, nor merely comforting, nor merely conferring the adoption of sons, but changing us into the image of God, begetting in us a thirst to be like Him whose sons we are; to have done with sin, and to cast off corruption, and to put on perfect holiness. The more the Spirit reveals of Christ, the more the believer yearns to be like Christ: “We all,” writes the Apostle, “with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Lord the Spirit⁷.” And the end of this progressive change will be, the fulness of assimilation to our glorified Redeemer, in that day of which it is said “When He shall appear we know that we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is.”

Thus, beloved brethren, I have endeavoured to remind you of a few of the great truths which especially belong to our commemoration this day of the descent of the Holy Ghost. We then became possessors of the crowning blessing of our redemption; of that for which Christ was born and suffered and bled on the

⁷ 2 Cor. iii. 18 (Greek).

cross ; of that which we never could have had, but for that His finished work ; of that which makes a marked difference between the Jewish prophet and the Christian child. Let me remind you also, that the gift of the Spirit is not a precious advantage belonging to *some* Christians, but a necessary qualification for *all* Christians. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” You cannot serve Christ in this life, you cannot be with Christ in the next life, unless you are taught and led by this Holy Spirit, of whom we have been speaking to-day. You may serve the world well, you may serve your country well, you may make for yourselves a name and a fame here, without the Spirit of God ; but you cannot serve God at all, without His Spirit. Did you ever reflect seriously on this ? or have you been accustomed to look on this whole subject as an unreal one, leading to fanaticism, and best abstained from by sober men of the world ? O believe me, the unreality is all on your side,—the sobriety all on ours. Go, and abandon the unreality of a half-believed Bible,—and awake to the sobriety of men who have a glorious eternal inheritance, and are living in its prospect. Plead in prayer with the Father to give you the Spirit of His beloved Son, which He is pledged never to withhold from them that ask Him ; and thus becoming real men, and men in earnest, walking in the Spirit, grow in grace and in the knowledge and service of Christ.

SERMON XXV.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

1854.

JUDE 20, 21.

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

WE have now passed through the commemorations of the former half of our Christian year. Beginning with the season of Advent, or preparation for the coming of Christ, we celebrated His Incarnation at Christmas, then followed Him through the various events of His life in the flesh,—His Circumcision, His manifestation to the Gentiles, His fasting in the wilderness, His Passion, His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven. And last Sunday we commemorated that great accomplishment of the promise of the Father by Him, which was the seal of His work of redemption. And surely such a course

of the Christian year is wisely appointed by the Church, to keep these great events continually before us;—to bind them up by the laws of association with the very revolutions of the seasons and the recurring periods of our lives. Such reminders indeed we want; for the world and the flesh are ever present with us, but the objects of our faith are unseen and far away. To feel an interest in things temporal, is but the bent of our nature; but to be interested in things eternal, is the result of an effort carried on against nature, and in spite of present appearances. We need no help, to keep us alive to the matters of this world; but every help, to awaken us to the concerns of our souls. In the former, the supply ministers to the demand, and often falls short of it; in the latter, the demand can only be called forth by abundant supply continually brought home to us all. It is well then, that Advent, and Christmas, and Lent, and Easter, and Ascension day, and Whit-Sunday, will not suffer us to forget that we have a Heavenly Father who loved us,—a merciful Saviour who died and rose and pleads for us,—a blessed Spirit of holiness, who dwells among us to sanctify us.

And now all these reminders are over for the present year, and we are entering on the long course of Sundays which are devoted to the ordinary teaching of the Christian man,—to setting before him his covenant place, his obligation to live for God and his neighbour,

his attitude as a servant and soldier of Jesus Christ.

But before we do this, one Sunday is set apart to contemplate the great doctrine which is the sum of all that we have been passing through: the doctrine of the co-existence of those Three Persons in the Godhead, whom we have seen co-operating in the glorious work of Redemption. So that Trinity Sunday collects together all that have gone before, and closes the testimony which is borne by every year of our lives to the great truths by which we live before God.

I said, there was need for such an arrangement. I implied that we were in danger of forgetting these things. And the same is suggested very forcibly by the words of our text. They form a strong contrast to that which had preceded. "Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

That is,—the multitude will go on its way, holding in contempt the servants of Christ. The revelation of God in His Word

will be to them a subject of doubt and ridicule. The lust and luxury of the world, these will be their attractions in life. For communion with God or His people, they will have no taste, but will separate themselves from them. What fashion requires of them, that they will scrupulously perform. Rare attendance at the house of God, rarer still at the Lord's table,—these will be the exceptions, which set forth and make manifest the rule of their lives. These are *sensual*—as our version has it; but the word is that peculiar one to which I once before called your attention¹, signifying men who live under the influence of the natural human soul and mind,—led by their understandings,—thinking themselves wise, arguing by what they see and what they hear and what men think and say,—and having none of the Spirit,—no power to know what sin is, no power to know what righteousness is, no power to judge the prince of this world, or detect his devices; with no definite expectation for another world, no building raised up on the one foundation, no faith, nor hope, nor love to God, nor to man for God's sake. Such will ever be the way of the world—and more and more, as the end draws on. Great discoveries, great powers vouchsafed to man, the advance of superficial knowledge and therefore of pride,—these, and many cognate influences, shall tend to swell the number of the scoffers of the last days.

¹ See p. 261.

BUT YE, BELOVED——. Living amongst these careless ones, shall be a little flock, known to their Father and their Shepherd and their Guide,—marked out in strong contrast to the children of the world. Their rule is the will of One who is invisible. They walk not by the sight of their eyes, nor by the hearing of their ears. For them, the fashion of this world has no authority. Its varnished selfishness is their abhorrence; its convenient falsehoods are an abomination to them. In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, they march straight onward in the path of the commandments of their God. Knit by faith to an unseen Saviour, they have meat to eat that the world knows not of,—even the daily bread of God's Holy Spirit. Their lives testify against the world, and therefore the world hates them; not indeed, in these smooth and tolerant days, with the hatred of persecution and exclusion from society, but with a hatred whose edge is as keen, though its blow descends not so violently,—the hatred of silent scorn and bitter contempt, of cold acquaintance and half-severed friendship, of uncharitable imputation, and easy thinking of evil.

It is to this little flock that the words of our text are addressed;—it is to them that Trinity Sunday speaks home with all its voices of mystery and sublimity; it is these persons whom Redemption binds with its threefold cord of Power and Love and Wisdom.

BUT YE, BELOVED. These men are the objects of LOVE; not from the world, but from the Father. God looks on them with perfect approval; not that they are perfect in themselves, but that they are united to His beloved Son, in whom He is perfectly pleased. They are His beloved; precious to Him, and objects of His especial care. They are the salt of the earth, keeping it from ruin. Ten such men of old would have saved the cities of the plain; and our great cities, the centres of selfishness and ungodliness and pride, are only saved now, because of God's beloved who dwell in them. Often has the dark tempest risen over them, freighted with wrath: but the triple bow of God's covenant mercy has been set in the cloud for His own, and the guilty have escaped.

And what lesson may these, God's servants, learn to-day? BUILDING YOURSELVES UP ON YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH. There is but one Foundation. Other can no man lay. And that one is already laid by God. But every man must build thereupon. And the building which he is to rear, is himself. The stones which he is to lay, are the thoughts and words and acts of his daily life. And he builds himself up on his most holy faith; that is,—Christ, the sure foundation, is the basis of all. Christ's Love constrains him; and whatever he does, in word or deed, he does all in the name of the Lord Jesus. And observe the necessary progress here. This is no calm complacent acqui-

escence in the truths of the Gospel, with which a man may set quiet for years, and be just where and what he was ; but it is a *building* ; —a continual laying on of more, and advancing higher. As year after year passes, the man fills more space in the spiritual temple, until his allotted portion is finished, and he enters into his rest.

But what are the various steps and details of this holy work ? How does it connect itself with our great subject to-day ? Both these questions are answered by following the words of our text.

PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST. The life of these men is a life of prayer. And that prayer is described in its very element and essence. There are various kinds of prayer, taken as regards its *lower* side,—what men know of and see and hear. There is prayer in a set form, and extempore prayer ; prayer aloud, and silent prayer ; prayer standing, and prayer kneeling : but in God's sight, as regards the *upper* side of prayer,—as it goes up to heaven,—there is but one kind of prayer, and that is, prayer in the Holy Ghost. All prayer is of one spirit : the spirit namely of reconciliation, which causes a man to cry, as a child to its father, for pardon, for support, for every blessing. The worldly-minded, who have not the Spirit, do not pray ; they may kneel by the bedside, they may kneel in the family, they may kneel in the church, but they do not PRAY ; no thought rises in the

confidence of faith from their hearts to God ; no earnest waiting, as of those who wait for the morning, looks unto Him till He have mercy upon them, and answer their request. No indeed—the words of prayer are uttered by them, or listened to by them, and they go their way for that time, utterly reckless about what has been asked, relieved because a disagreeable duty is over and their conscience lightened of its load. But this is not prayer ; dishonour not that sacred word by applying it to such mockeries as these. Just so the Pagan, just so the Papist, bows down before his image, or repeats his prescribed paternosters. O call not such services of unmeaning bondage, prayer ! For he who prays in the Holy Ghost, prays not to satisfy his conscience, nor to comply with custom ; but God the Holy Spirit dwelling within him lifts his being, his heart and desires, towards the Father and Christ ; he is filled with yearnings to be holier, to be purer, to be more abundant in acts of self-denying love, to be more like his Father, and his Saviour ; and these yearnings exceed his power of expression ; and though he speaks his daily wants, and utters those of his spiritual necessities which are felt and recognized, yet there are many things which he cannot utter ; his soul has amazing depths of infirmity, of ignorance, of desire, which his own consciousness cannot fathom ; and so he is compelled to cast himself on that sweet

Spirit of comfort to plead for him—to fill up his wants, to be his advocate in the secret place of heaven. What wonderful words are these—“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” And therefore St. Jude places this praying in the Holy Ghost first, because it is the constant act of the Christian,—his breathing of the spiritual life in its element the Holy Spirit. For he prays not only when he puts up petitions to God in words,—not only when he concentrates his thoughts on his spiritual wants,—but at all times. What the spur of ambition and pleasure and self-gratification is to the man of the world, that prayer in the Holy Ghost is to the disciple of Christ; it carries him onward, it bears him upward; it embodies his motives and his efforts. And thus the Third Person of the blessed Trinity is, when we speak of the inward life of the beloved of God in contrast to that of the world, the first in order; the nearest to them as dwelling in them, as furnishing the breath of that life, which is prayer.

But what is the object, in few and simple words, of this state of prayer? **KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD.** Here again the con-

trast is drawn sharply and strongly between the children of God, and the world: between the spiritual, and the merely sensual or merely intellectual. What do they know of the love of God? Observe, St. Jude does not here mean *love to God*, but the Love of God to us: God's LOVE. If he meant love to God, the worldly man might perchance find an escape, and say, I love God in His works; I love Him for His mercies to His creatures. Even then I should answer, I know of no love to God worthy the name, which does not spring from a sense of His having first loved us. But now St. Jude gives us this point of contrast at once: we are to keep ourselves in the Love of God: in that aspect of God towards us, which He has towards all who are united to His beloved Son by faith. Now from this Love, nothing without can separate us. "I am persuaded," says St. Paul, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord²." No—there is but one thing which can separate us from the Love of God, and that one thing is our own will,—our own act and deed. And therefore we must keep ourselves in the Love of God; in the state of approval before God, which appertains only to those who are

² Rom. viii. 38, 39.

one with Christ. And how keep ourselves? Watch and pray, and use all means of grace, that we fall not from our place in Christ; for thus only can we forfeit the Father's love. And O brethren, what blessing can surpass, what can approach this, to keep ourselves in God's Love? To one who is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, what are the inequalities of this life's course, be they ever so rugged? Every Christian, and every Christian family, has known such persons,—through feebleness and spiritual helplessness wonderfully upheld, faint, yet pursuing,—with very little strength for most things, but with strength enough for this, to flee to the refuge which God has provided, and hold on there. And some can speak of the conduct and example of such feeble but consistent Christians under trial, and in the sight of death; can bear testimony how completely at such a time their faith is proved sufficient; how it is shewn that they have kept themselves in the Love of God, and never forgotten, nor foregone, their place in His reconciled family.

And thus the Father, who dwelleth in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see, holds the next place in order in the exhortation to sustain the spiritual life; that we praying in the Holy Ghost, in Him whose presence with us is the fruit of the Father's divine Love, should, striving in such prayer, and in that life whose habit is prayer, keep ourselves

in the Love of the Father; continue persuaded by faith of His wonderful Love towards us in Christ, and leading our lives in the fulness of that persuasion.

But the believer has also a hope full of immortality. LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE. Here again the contrast is brought out. Those worldly persons, of whom he has been speaking, are reserved for judgment. That day prophesied of by Enoch the seventh from Adam, which shall witness the Lord's coming, shall also witness their destruction from before His face. But to these, the believers in Christ, His second coming will be His greatest act of Mercy;—the removing of all their fears, and the realizing of all their fondest hopes. "Looking," says St. Paul, "for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ³." There, amidst that wonderful concourse of heaven and earth, of all ages and all nations, will they be found,—not ashamed though unworthy,—though sinners by nature, yet saved by grace; miracles of the Redeemer's Mercy,—accepted in the Beloved, nay beloved themselves, because united to Him.

And thus shall God's people enter into all the fulness of this blessed doctrine; dwelt in by the Holy Spirit, received into and kept in the perfect Love of the Father, they shall be endowed with eternal life by the Mercy of the

³ Tit. ii. 13.

Redeemer. Thus the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity co-operate in the work of saving man;—enter into, and abide in, the believer's soul.

This is the peculiar interest which I wish to give to the doctrine this day. I would treat it not as merely matter of proof from Scripture, not as merely an article of our faith, but rather as an article of our practice; as a doctrine which should animate our prayers, should regulate our watchfulness, should quicken and confirm our hopes.

And I beseech you, put not what has been said away from you, nor say within, or among yourselves, "He spoke to a favoured set,—to the beloved people of God; who they may be I know not, but the sermon did not concern me." O dear friends, think not and speak not thus. These beloved of God are no favoured set, no privileged caste among Christians. Every sinner that flees to Christ for salvation, is a member of this body. The merciful Redeemer invites every one of you to join it. And O that such might be the case. O that this course of sermons during our Christian festivals this year, in which I have endeavoured to press home to you plain spiritual truths, might result in some turning heart and soul to God, and glorifying Him in a life of holiness and self-denying love. O that some among you, who have been standing idle as yet, might henceforth begin to build yourselves up on your most holy faith,—to pray

in the Holy Ghost, to keep yourselves in the love of God, to wait for the mercy of Christ unto eternal life.

Remember, beloved, the fashion of this world passeth away. The stately pageant, that awed and delighted us for an hour, shall scatter in a moment; the majesty of this world's authority, the triumphs of the art of man, the strains of human praise, shall be as a forgotten dream; there shall be a day, when the voice of the preacher shall cease to persuade, and God's Spirit shall strive with man no longer; and then will come to each of us the one great question, before which our inmost being will yield up its secrets,—“For what hast THOU lived? for that which passeth, or for that which abideth?”

Then it will be seen, who among us shall stand, and who shall fall; who shall inherit everlasting glory, and who shame and everlasting contempt. Then it shall be known, all masks being drawn off, and every thought laid open, how many of us have merely been listening here as to idle tales,—and how many have kept themselves in the Love of the Father, waited for the Mercy of the Son, and prayed in the Strength of the Holy Spirit. To whom, three Persons and one God, be glory and honour in the Church throughout all ages. Amen.

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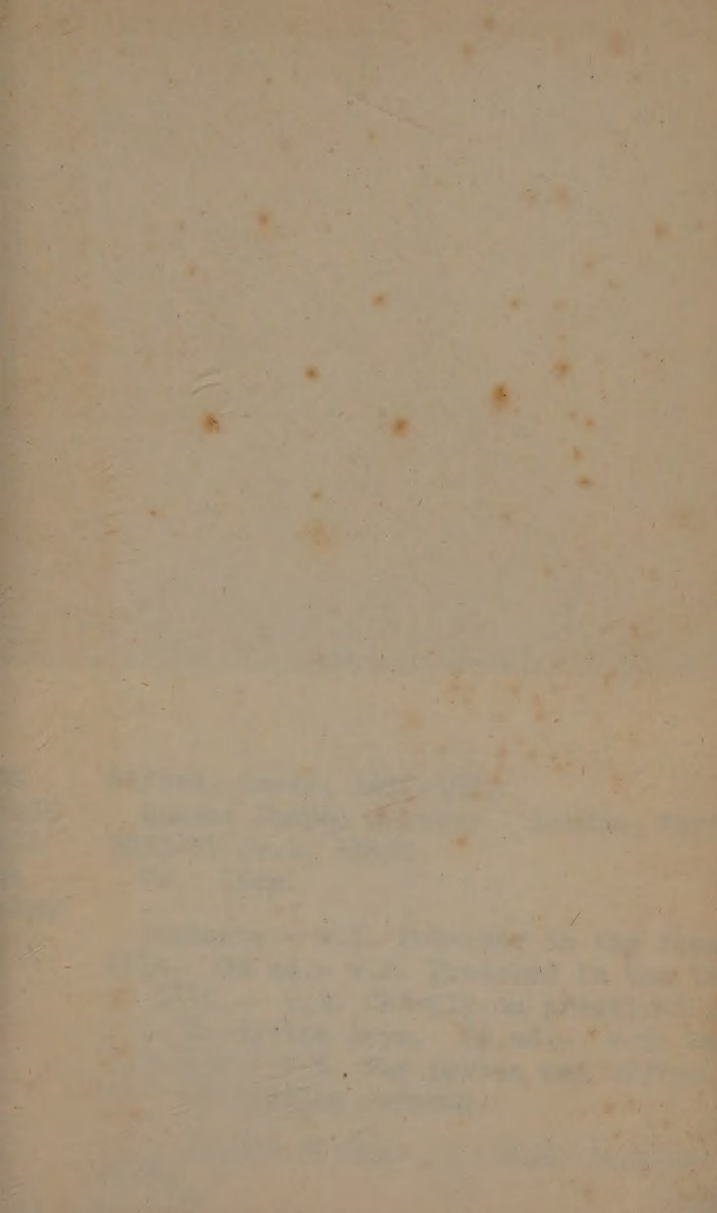
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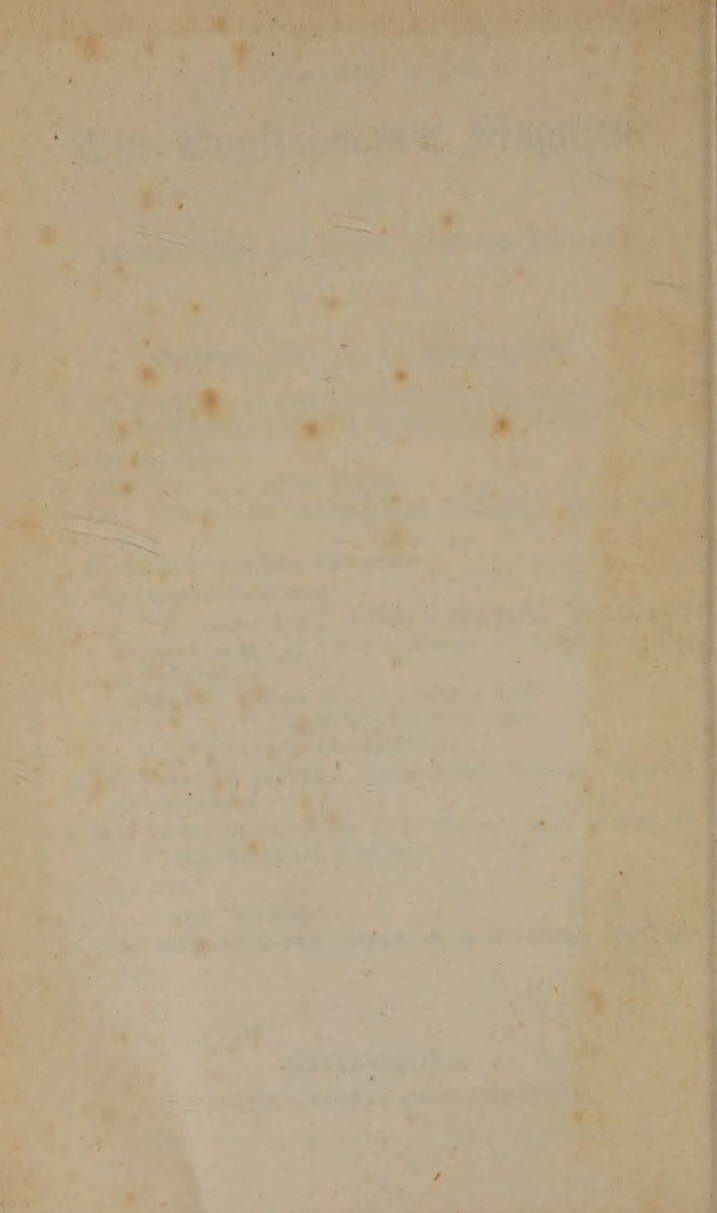
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